Democratic School Leadership: Perceptions and Practices in Secondary Schools in Kenya

Thesis

DEMOCRATIC SCHOOL LEADERSHIP: PERCEPTIONS AND PRACTICES IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN KENYA

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DEDICATION

To my Uncle

Gordon Oyomno

for

Your inspiration.

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ABSTRACT

My study investigates school principals', teachers' and students' perceptions of democratic school leadership in secondary schools in Kenya and how these perceptions inform practices in their schools. The study is set against a background of a recent requirement by the Kenyan Government that school principals adopt democratic school leadership practices. This follows the enactment of the UN charter on the rights of children in 2001 and the subsequent ban on corporal punishment in schools. Very little research exists in this area in Kenya and, indeed, sub-Saharan Africa even though literature reveals that strong school leadership is a key requirement for school success, effectiveness and improvement.

Adopting an interpretive–constructionist paradigm, I conducted the study in two phases. In phase one, I interviewed 12 principals to generate background information on democratic school leadership and to select two schools for an in-depth study; one where the principal perceived her/his leadership practices as very democratic and one where the principal viewed her practices as less democratic. Phase two was a 'compressed' ethnographic case study of two schools. I gathered data through semi-structured interviews, observations, focus group discussions and informal conversations.

The findings suggest that most principals, teachers and students perceive democratic school leadership as participation in decision making in the school and the right to express their views without inhibitions. The informants' ideas, though not inclusive of all the elements of democracy, are not significantly different from the view of democratic school leadership discussed in the literature – 'rational' perceptions. However, most practices in the schools were not consistent with these perceptions. The schools practised what they referred to as 'partial/guided' democracy, especially when dealing with students – 'culturally embedded' perceptions. This differed between the two schools and was based on the socio-cultural context of each school. Therefore, despite the Government's requirements that schools adopt democratic school leadership, very little attention has been paid to these requirements.

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ABBREVIATIONS

BEd	Bachelor of Education
BoG	Board of Governors
CRE	Christian Religious Education
EFA	Education for All
EU	European Union
HoD	Head of Department
ILO	International Labour Organization
KCPE	Kenya Certificate of Primary Education
KCSE	Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education
KESI	Kenya Education Staff Institute
KIE	Kenya Institute of Education
KISE	Kenya Institute for Special Education
KNEC	Kenya National Examinations Council
KSSHA	Kenya Secondary School Heads Association
LSK	Law Society of Kenya
MEd	Masters of Education
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
NCSL	National College for School Leadership
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OU	The Open University
PEC	Parents Executive Committee
PGD	Post Graduate Diploma
PTA	Parents Teachers Association
SMASSE	Strengthening Mathematics and Science in Secondary Education
TIQET	Totally and Integrated Quality Education and Training
TSC	Teachers Service Commission
SRC	Student Representative Councils
UN	United Nations
UNESCO	United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
WTO	World Trade Organization

CHAPTER ONE: BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Introduction

In this study I investigate how principals, teachers and students in secondary schools in Kenya perceive democratic school leadership and how these perceptions inform practices in their schools. I explore the extent to which school principals intentionally put in place structures to promote democracy in schools. This is required by the Kenyan Government which recently (Republic of Kenya, 2001) started championing education that is "necessary for the development and protection of democratic institutions and human rights" (Republic of Kenya, 2005:1).

For the Government to ensure that democratic institutions and human rights are protected it needs to educate students about democratic principles and for this to be achieved, schools need to adopt democratic practices. In reference to school leadership in Africa, Harber (1997:3) points out that; "if schools are to educate for democracy, then they must practise what they preach". In essence, schools in Kenya need to be managed in ways that foster the development of democratic skills and values among both staff and students. As spelt out in a 2005 Policy Paper (Republic of Kenya, 2005), this can be achieved, at least in part, by involving the parents, teachers, students, the boards of governors and the community in the management of schools. San Antonio (2008) considers the involvement of these groups an important step towards democratic school leadership.

The need for the school leaders to adopt democratic school leadership is well captured in Aduda's (2007) comment on the school management in Kenya. He asserts that:

> School management has changed from leader-centred strategies to a stakeholders-based system, where policies and programmes have to be discussed by the rulers and the ruled and common ground agreed upon before implementation. The hallmark of management at present is *democracy* (my italics), which headteachers have to adopt and promote in schools (Aduda's foreword in Otula, 2007: vii).

Similarly, Otula (2007), a principal of a national school in Kenya who won the Kenya Secondary Schools Heads Association award for 'good' school management in 2008, observes that a young democracy like Kenya can only prosper in its democratic institutions if the learners understand and appreciate democratic practices from an early stage in life. Thus, the school has a "key role in promoting democracy because it offers the forum for introducing learners to democratic practices and allowing them to feel and understand its benefits" (Otula, 2007:67). Otula argues that since education is a means through which we socialise children to take over the values of society, it is incumbent that education is used as a vehicle for teaching democratic practices. This view is consistent with what Moos (2008:233) refers to as the "sociological explanation for schooling". In outlining the sociological and cultural explanations for schooling, Moos emphasises that schools are the major social and cultural institutions that societies establish and maintain because they want to ensure that the next generation of citizens is brought up and educated to maintain and develop the society.

Otula's (2007) view of the changing roles of school principals has also been expressed by others. For example, Heck (2002), in a review of studies from around the world on school leadership, suggests that the principal's role has

changed considerably in many nations over the past decades, requiring a range of new responsibilities, notably, the sharing of authority and leadership among others within the school community.

Therefore, if the Kenyan government wants students to be educated democratically, then school principals should adopt what Bredeson (2004:709) describes as "commitment to core democratic values and principles and making them a lived reality within schools and the communities they serve". This is because the democratic school, like democracy itself, does not happen by chance but results from explicit attempts by educators to put in place arrangements and opportunities that will bring democracy to life (Bredeson, 2004). That is, the skills and values of democracy are not generic; they are socially learned (Harber, 2002).

Emerging from this discussion, I sought to answer the following questions:

- What do Kenyan secondary school principals, teachers and students perceive as democratic school leadership?
- How do these perceptions inform leadership practices in their schools?

In seeking to answer these questions, I have adopted the developmental conception of democratic practice (Woods, 2004, 2005 & 2006; Woods and Woods, 2008) and the elements of democratic school leadership in practice (see Fielding, 1973, 2001, 2004, 2006, 2007; Møller, 2006; Starratt, 1991, 2001, 2004; Trafford, 2003). I discuss these elements in detail in chapter two.

Overview of the thesis

This thesis is divided into eight chapters. In chapter one I provide a background to the study as well as discuss the Kenyan education system. In chapter two, I review relevant literature on school leadership and management, the developmental conception of democratic school leadership that informed my thinking in preparing the interview guide, focus group discussions guide and observations. I also discuss literature on school leadership in Africa.

In chapter three, I discuss the methodological approaches including the philosophical paradigm, the methods of data collection and analysis. I also explain the ethical issues that arose from my study and the challenges that I faced during the data collection. In chapter four, I analyse the data that I collected in the first phase of the study and explain how I selected the two Case Schools. In chapters five and six I analyse the data I collected in Case One School and Case Two School respectively. In chapter seven, I present a discussion of the data based on literature. Finally, in chapter eight, I summarise the critical issues emerging from my study, limitations of the study and suggest areas for further research.

In the rest of this chapter I outline the Kenyan education system to provide the context of the study.

Kenyan context

Introduction

The Republic of Kenya is in the eastern part of Africa neighbouring Uganda to the West, Tanzania to the South - West, Sudan and Ethiopia to the North, Somalia to the East and Indian Ocean to the South and South - East. Since getting independence from the British colonial rule in 1964, Kenya has practised multiparty democracy with presidential, parliamentary and civic elections held every five years. However, in 1981 the country's constitution changed from multiparty democracy to single party 'democracy', but reverted back to multiparty democracy in 1991 after violent protests from multiparty democracy advocates. Although elections are held every five years, they are often marred by ethnic violence and claims of rigging and manipulation (Mutua, 2008) as was the case in 2007/2008 when more than 1300 people lost their lives. It is against this political background that the Kenyan Government requires schools to adopt democratic school leadership to foster its 'young democracy'.

Kenyan education system

The Kenyan education system has been changing since independence in 1964, both in structure and content. From 1985 the country has followed an 8-4-4 system of education (eight years in primary school, four years in secondary school and at least four years in university studying for a

bachelor's degree). At the end of the primary school cycle, pupils[1] sit for the Kenya Certificate of Primary Education (KCPE) examinations, which they must pass to qualify for admission into secondary school. The students sit for the Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (KCSE) at the end of secondary school to qualify for university admission. These examinations are administered centrally by the Kenya National Examinations Council (KNEC). The changes in the education system have been brought about through the recommendations and reports of several educational commissions formed by the government, which I discuss next.

Education commissions in Kenya since independence

The Kenya Education Commission (The Ominde Commission) 1964

This was formed at a time when the nation wanted to Africanise education and make it relevant to the needs of an independent Kenya. The Commission needed to consider the cultural aspirations and values of a united Kenya and remove the racially segregated schooling that existed before independence (Republic of Kenya, 1964).

The Commission recommended a change in the education structure to 7-4-2-3; seven years of primary education, four years of (lower) secondary education, two years in high school (upper secondary) and a minimum of three years of university education for bachelor's degree. Before independence, there were eight years of primary education for Africans punctuated by stiff examinations while Europeans and Asians had seven continuous years of primary education (Bogonko, 1992). The Commission

[1] In Kenya the word 'pupils' is normally used for learners in primary school and 'students' for those in secondary school.

also recommended a review of the curriculum to make it more academic as opposed to the vocational one offered to Africans before independence. Based on the new constitution that had just been enacted, the Commission focused on the democratic ideals that the country had adopted with the end of racial segregation. However, it did not mention any specific issue on the management of schools, instead it recommended that the management of education be centralised under one ministry (Bogonko, 1992). Before independence, there were schools that were managed by the Missionaries and they had their own curriculum while others were managed by the colonial government.

The National Committee on Educational Objectives and Policies (The Gachathi Report) 1976

This committee was appointed to help the country refocus its educational goals to address the country's new challenges that had emerged since independence. The main term of reference for the committee, among other things, was to "redefine Kenya's educational objectives and recommend policies to achieve these objectives within the financial constraints" (Republic of Kenya, 1976:193).

Of relevance to this study is that the committee recommended the creation of a body that would specifically train Ministry of Education Administrative staff. This led to the establishment of the Kenya Education Staff Institute (KESI) in 1981. KESI was meant to be an in-service training institute for officers of the Ministry of Education across the country who hold administrative and management positions, including school principals.

Soon after the committee submitted its report, there was a political change in the country after the death of the first president in 1978. Consequently, most of the recommendations of this committee were not implemented, although subsequent education commissions borrowed heavily from its recommendations.

The Presidential Working Party on the Establishment of the Second Public University (The Mackay Report) 1981

This working party was mandated to establish whether there was need for a second public university in Kenya because at the time Kenya had only one public university (Republic of Kenya, 1981). Although its mandate was on university education, the recommendations had major implications for the other levels of education. It recommended starting a second public university that was technologically based and a change of structure of education from 7-4-2-3, to 8-4-4, as previously mentioned. The report did not consider the management of schools even though it led to major changes in the school curriculum, and the education system in general, which in turn affects school management.

The Presidential Working Party on Education and Manpower Training for the Next Decade and Beyond (The Kamunge Report) 1988

The major term of reference for this committee was to provide proposals and recommendations for the provision and expansion of education, training and research. It was also to look into the effective management, supervision, co-ordination, harmonization and maintenance of quality education for the next decade and beyond.

Of relevance to this study is that the Kamunge Report noted that the establishment of KESI was in response to the fact that many of the personnel in administrative and managerial positions in schools were qualified teachers without any management training (Republic of Kenya, 1988). KESI was supposed to address these needs of principals with a focus on practical day-to-day school administration/organisational matters and finances. The Report recommended that the role of KESI be expanded to include training for aspiring school principals (Republic of Kenya 1988).

Soon after the report, Eshiwani (1993), an educationist in Kenya, pointed out that the in-service training of school principals in Kenya was of great concern when KESI was established. He argued that school teachers, who had barely taught for two years after university, were being appointed principals without any induction whatsoever. Thus, many of these principals would take up these roles without any systematic initiation into their new positions. The only opportunities for them to glean some knowledge about the role was from the Heads Association meetings and seminars organized by the Provincial Directors of Education, but the latter were usually limited to school book keeping (Eshiwani, 1993).

Master Plan on Education and Training Task Force: 1997-2010

Unlike the other commissions and committees that were appointed by the president, this task force was initiated by the Ministry of Education. Its aim was to provide strategies to guide education and training for the socio-economic development of the country in the early 21st century (Republic of

Kenya, 1998). However, the recommendations of the master plan were overtaken by events when the president appointed another Commission in 1998: The Koech Commission.

Commission of Inquiry into the Education System of Kenya: Totally Integrated Quality Education and Training (TIQET), (The Koech Commission) 1999

The aim of this Commission was to study and make recommendations for a holistic approach to education in Kenya. The commission used an approach that was unprecedented. It reviewed the reports from previous committees, commissions, working parties and task forces on education in what it called "an inventory of current policy instruments" (Republic of Kenya 1999:353). This enabled the commission to not only come up with new recommendations but also re-emphasise those of previous commissions that it considered relevant.

On school leadership and management, the Report noted that "there is enormous political interference in the appointment of the headteachers in secondary schools in Kenya" (Republic of Kenya, 1999:225). It also highlighted that in most cases, experience, academic and professional qualifications for the job did not count. The TIQET Report emphasised that appointments were made from teachers who had had no prior training in institutional management. The Report observed that such lack of training adversely affected effective decision making and general management of secondary schools and the maintenance of quality and high standards of education and training. It recommended that training be offered to those

aspiring to be school principals as well as serving principals to improve their management skills.

It should, however, be noted that when these commissions were appointed, they did not visit schools and/or hold sessions with teachers and students or conduct any research on which to base their findings. They visited each district headquarters and held sessions with the public, politicians and representatives of non governmental organisations. In most cases the Secondary Schools Heads Association representatives made presentations on behalf of their members, not bearing in mind that each school has its own unique needs. The people most affected by these changes – students - were never given a chance to present their views as evidenced in the introductory sections of the reports.

The education management structure

The management structure of education in Kenya changes according to the government in power. For example, from April 2008, two ministries in charge of education have been established; the Ministry of Basic Education, which is responsible for primary and secondary schools education and the Ministry of Higher Education, which deals with tertiary education. Prior to this change there was a single Ministry of Education. In the Ministry of Basic Education, the Minister provides the political leadership while the Permanent Secretary is the accounting officer and overall administrative head. The Education Secretary is responsible for all the professional matters. Regionally, Provincial Directors of Education, District and Municipal Education Officers

are in charge of administration and supervision of education in their respective provinces, districts and municipalities. There are also the National Education Advisory Board, Provincial and District Advisory Boards which act as decision-making organs at their respective levels. Education institutions are managed by boards of governors (BoGs) for secondary schools, school committees for primary schools, and administered by their respective institutional heads. The latter are popularly referred to as headteachers in primary schools, while in secondary schools, they are called principals. Basically, these boards and committees implement policies made by the central government.

The school system

Most primary schools in Kenya are co-educational (girls and boys in the same class) and most secondary schools are single sex institutions (for boys or girls). The majority of secondary schools are boarding schools where students only go home during the school holidays although, there are a few that cater for both boarding and day students. Schools are either public (run by the government) or private (owned and managed by individuals and organisations such as churches). Teachers in public schools are employed and paid by the government through the Teachers Service Commission (TSC) but a few are employed by the BoG of the individual school.

Public secondary schools are categorised into national, provincial and district schools. This grading system of schools was not only based on the physical facilities in schools but was also political (Eshiwani, 1993). National schools

comprise those ones that during colonial times were meant for white students only and others that were started by the missionaries to educate Africans. The teachers were all paid by the government which also provided the facilities for the schools. Most of these schools had, and still have, good facilities. Currently, they admit students from all over the country, the same percentage from each district. There are 19 national schools in Kenya, most of which have excellent performance records in national examinations, probably because they admit the top performing pupils from primary schools.

The provincial category consists of schools which at independence were supported by the missionaries but had fewer facilities than the national schools. They also included former government assisted schools which were started by the local communities through *harambee* (community fundraising) because of the high demand for education (Eshiwani, 1993). Before they were renamed provincial schools the government used to provide assistance in the form of teachers, while the local community contributed funds for purchase of supplies and construction of buildings. Currently, these schools admit 60 percent of their students from within the local district, 35 percent from the other districts within the province and five percent from outside the province. District schools are former unaided *harambee* schools which were started and entirely managed by the local communities. The communities raised funds through school fees and *harambees* which were used to hire teachers, support staff, buy materials and construct physical structures. Currently, these schools admit all their students from within the local district. As already stated, they are all public schools.

Private schools are owned by individuals and organisations such as churches and have their own internal management structures. While some follow the local curriculum, others follow international curriculum such as baccalaureate. In this study I focus on the public schools even though the issues discussed may apply to some private schools.

The school academic year in Kenya runs from January to November. This is divided into three academic sessions referred to as 'terms'. The first term starts in January and ends in March. The month of April is a short holiday. The second term runs from May to July, with another short holiday in August. The third term runs from September to mid November after which students go for the long Christmas holidays.

Management of public secondary schools.

Boards of Governors (BoGs)

The BoGs are appointed by the Minister for Education and are answerable to the Education Secretary on matters concerning the management of secondary schools. The Boards also report to the TSC on matters concerning the conduct, promotion and discipline of teachers. They sometimes employ teachers on contract when there is insufficient number of teachers from the TSC. The members of the BoG normally include a community representative, a sponsor (the Church), special interest groups such as non governmental organisations or women. The area administrator,

normally referred to as the 'Chief', the area Councillor, and the Member of Parliament are ex-officio members.

Parents teachers associations (PTAs).

The PTA consists of teachers and all parents with children in a school. The PTA provides for the school's general development, maintenance and welfare. Up to the mid 1990s the government used to provide money for running schools, buying equipment and paying teachers' salaries. The other staff were paid by the BoGs. Since that time the government has paid teachers' salaries while the parents meet all the other costs. However, from January 2008, the president decreed that the government would subsidise students' school fees. This is currently being implemented. The rest of a school's finances, such as boarding, maintenance and development levies, are still provided by the parents. The principal is the secretary to the PTA and the PTA chairman is a member of the BoG. The PTA executive committee comprises parents elected by other parents representing each class in the school. The executive committee members elect the chairman.

Principals

Principals are the executive officers in charge of various operations within the schools including serving as accounting officers, interpreting and implementing policy decisions. They serve as secretary to the BoG. They are also expected to promote the welfare of all staff and students within the institution (Republic of Kenya, 2002). They are appointed by the TSC mainly based on their experience.

Prefects

These are groups of students who act as student leaders in schools in Kenya. Their roles and mode of selection vary from one school to another. In some schools, most of the day-to-day organisation and discipline of the school, outside the classroom, is carried out by prefects (Griffin, 1994). Griffin explains that in some schools the selection of prefects is made at two levels– firstly, by a recommendation from the teachers in charge of dormitories and classteachers in consultation with the existing prefects and then confirmed by the principal or the whole teaching staff. Very little has, however, been documented about the nature and operations of prefects in schools in Kenya.

The statutory bodies

These bodies include:

- The TSC charged with the responsibility of employing and paying the teachers on behalf of the government.
- The Kenya Institute of Education (KIE) - designs the curriculum for all the schools and colleges offering certificate courses.
- The Kenya National Examinations Council (KNEC) - examines the students at the end of each educational level, that is, at the end of primary schooling and secondary schooling.
- The Kenya Institute for Special Education (KISE) - trains teachers for children with special needs.

- The Kenya Education Staff Institute (KESI) - offers refresher courses to teachers already in the field, especially those at the management level such as school principals, their deputies and heads of departments.

Training of teachers

The teachers in secondary schools are trained at various universities, both public and private, while a few are trained at the diploma colleges, especially those offering technical courses. As stated earlier, there is no training for teachers aspiring to be principals apart from optional in - service courses offered by KESI to those already appointed as principals. However, teacher training at the university includes some courses in educational administration and management.

National goals of education in Kenya

The goals of education in Kenya as outlined in the Kenya Education Commission Report (Republic of Kenya, 1964: 21-25) are divided into six broad areas. These are:

1. Education in Kenya must foster a sense of nationhood and promote national unity. That is, even though there are different ethnic communities, races and religions in Kenya, education should help the youth acquire a sense of nationhood by removing conflicts and by promoting positive attitudes of mutual respect which will enable them to live together in harmony and to make a positive contribution to national life.

2. Education should meet the economic and social needs of national development by equipping the youth of the country to play an effective productive role in the life of the nation. It should also help the youth to develop an inquiring attitude towards traditionally established values and to blend the best of the traditional values with the changing requirements of a modern society.
3. Education should provide opportunities for the fullest development of individual talents and personality. It should help every child to develop his/her potential interest and abilities.
4. Education should promote social justice, morality, equality and foster a sense of social responsibility within an education system which provides equal educational opportunities for all. It should give the youth varied and challenging opportunities for collective activities and corporate social service.
5. Education should instil in the youth of Kenya an understanding of past and present varied culture and its valid place in contemporary society, and a sense of respect for unfamiliar cultures.
6. Education should foster positive attitudes to other countries and to the international community of which Kenya is part, with all the obligations and responsibilities, rights and benefits that the membership to international community entails.

Of relevance to my study is the emphasis on education that gives opportunities to "every child" and "promoting social justice, morality, equality and foster a sense of social responsibility..." which are premised on the democratic principles that the country adopted in the independence

constitution (Mutua, 2008). The constitution "provided for a multiparty democracy, a freely elected bicameral parliament and guaranteed individual rights" (Mutua 2008:59). The Kenyan 'democratic' system fits within what Whitaker (2008:255) refers to as 'transitional democracy' which needs nurturing through many agencies, with education being the main one.

Unrest in secondary schools

Following unrest by students in many secondary schools in Kenya in 2000 and 2001, the government established a task force to investigate students' indiscipline and unrest in secondary schools in 2001. The task force identified causes of students' unrest to include:

- Lack of continuous supervision of students by teachers in boarding schools
- Lack of avenues for teachers and students to appraise their principals as a way of providing feedback to principals on their performance.
- Appointment of school principals based on political patronage, religious influence, tribalism or bribery. Thus "the loyalty of the principals is not necessarily to the institution but to the people who influenced the appointment" (Republic of Kenya, 2001:25).

In its report, the task force recommended that:

> Head-teachers should cultivate a democratic and participatory environment in the schools and encourage regular *barazas*[2] where the teachers and students are encouraged to express views, suggestions and grievances and

[2] Baraza is a Swahili word meaning an open forum or gathering in which people are free to express their views without inhibition. It is different from the normal school assembly in Kenyan context because, in the latter, only a few teachers - mostly those on duty and the school Principal and /or Deputy Principal address the students.

> where the school administration can get an opportunity to expound on policies (Republic of Kenya, 2001:27).

The committee also emphasised the need for democratic management of schools and a stronger involvement of parents, teachers and students in the decisions taken in school as well as banning of corporal punishment.

Subsequently, the government banned corporal punishment in schools in 2001. Equally, the juvenile justice system including the Children's Act of 2001 based on the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child in a domestic context, to which Kenya is a signatory, was established (McIvor, 2005a). In March 2002, the Minister for Education issued a proclamation in the Kenya Gazette stating that the entire Act was entering into force and in 2003 the Director of Education issued a circular to all heads and principals of learning institutions reminding them that corporal punishment was outlawed by the legal notice.

Like the situation in 2001, there was a wave of unrest in more than 300 Kenyan secondary schools in May-June, 2008 which led to the death of some students and much destruction of school property (Daily Nation, 2008). The unrest in 2008 was unprecedented because it spread across the whole country. It was also more violent and the level of destruction of school property was greater than witnessed before, something which politicians attributed to the post election violence that had occurred earlier in 2008. In all cases the students complained of "highhandedness" by the school administration in dealing with them. The government set up a parliamentary committee to investigate the causes of the unrest while also re-emphasising the importance of involving teachers, students and parents in decision-making

in schools. At the same time, the National Association of Parents Executive Committee recommended the re-introduction of corporal punishment to deal with what they considered to be indiscipline among students (East African Standard, 2008). This contradicts the ideals of democratic school leadership.

Sessional paper No. 1 of 2005: A policy framework for education, training and research

Initiated by the Ministry of Education after holding a consultative national education conference in 2003 on issues affecting education and training in Kenya, the paper focused on education reforms aimed at addressing both the overall goals of the national economic recovery strategy as set out by the government, and the international commitments including Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and Education for All (EFA) (Republic of Kenya, 2005). In the Sessional Paper, the Ministry of Education states that:

> The provision of education and training to all Kenyans is fundamental to the success of the Government's overall development strategy. First, the long-term objective of the government is to provide every Kenyan with basic quality education and training... Education also aims at enhancing the ability of the Kenyans to preserve and utilize the environment for productive gain and sustainable livelihoods... education is necessary for the development and protection of democratic institutions and human rights (Republic of Kenya 2005:1)

The Government also identifies the management of schools and educational resources as one of its main challenges:

> ... However, despite the substantial allocation of resources and notable achievements attained, the education sector still faces major challenges. Some of these challenges relate to access, equity, quality, relevance, efficiency in the management of educational institutions and resources, cost and financing of education, gender and regional disparities, and teacher quality and teacher utilization that can meet the challenges of the 21st century (Republic of Kenya 2005:13).

Despite the desire by the Government to achieve effective and democratic management of schools and the changes suggested by the education

commissions, there have been a lot of criticisms of the Kenyan education system. For example, Eshiwani (1993) argues that education administration, including school leadership in Kenya, has been undergoing constant change from independence to suit the shifting government policies. He claims that these changes may create an unstable and uncertain environment in which individual schools are not able to develop sound leadership policies that suit their own needs. The changes also affect the school curriculum which is centrally decided by the Ministry of Education. This, in turn, affects the approaches of leadership adopted by the schools considering that curriculum is an important component of school leadership.

Ntarangwi (2003) and Oplatka (2004) advance an argument that the Kenyan educational reforms, policies and leadership draw almost exclusively on perspectives of educational leadership taken from western literature and practice, thereby giving an impression that western models of school leadership are universally appropriate. Oplatka claims that the field of educational leadership and management in Kenya has developed along ethnocentric lines, being heavily dominated by Anglo-American paradigms because of colonial legacy. He contends that these paradigms may not necessarily suit the Kenyan context.

For this study, the literature on Kenyan educational system and school leadership indicates that there are a lot of changes that take place in the education/school system that the principals and teachers are expected to implement. The system is also centralised and, as Bush (2003) mentions, highly centralised systems tend to be bureaucratic and allow little discretion to

schools and local communities. Within this changing educational and school context I found it important to investigate how principals, teachers and students perceive democratic school leadership and how these perceptions inform practices in their schools.

Summary

- The structure of the education system in Kenya is centralised, hierarchical and bureaucratic. The central government makes most decisions which are then implemented by the schools. Thus, even though the government currently requires school principals to adopt democratic school leadership and include students, teachers and parents in the running of the schools, the hierarchical education management structure remains largely unchanged.
- Even though the principles of democracy are captured in the constitution and included in the national goals of education, most commissions of education did not explicitly make reference to it except the Koech Commission of 1999, the Task Force on students' unrest (Republic of Kenya 2001) and the Sessional Paper No. 1 of 2005.

CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF RELEVANT LITERATURE

Introduction

This chapter is divided into four main sections. In the first section, I discuss the concepts of leadership and management. In the second, I look at democracy and Woods' conception of developmental democratic practice which I discuss along with Møller's (2006) elements of democratic school leadership in practice. I then focus on culture and its implications for school leadership and, lastly, I review literature on school leadership in Africa. Each of the four sections is directly linked to my discussions in chapter seven.

School leadership and management

Defining leadership in any categorical way has proved "both difficult and, perhaps, unnecessary" (Goddard, 2003:13) because there is no agreed definition and it overlaps with two similar terms: management and administration (Bush, 2003). These concepts are often used in different contexts to refer broadly to the same area of study and practice (Dimmock, 2002; Coleman, 2005). Historically, the development of education management drew heavily on several more firmly established disciplines including sociology, political science, economics and general management (Bush, 2003). Bush observes that in the late parts of the 20th century the emphasis on management very much reflected the business world and its use in education formed part of the 'policy borrowing' at the time. Currently, 'management' is widely used in Britain, Europe and Africa, whilst

'administration' is preferred in the USA, Canada and Australia (Bush, 2008a & 2003). Bush maintains that irrespective of how these terms are defined, school leaders experience difficulty in deciding the balance between higher order tasks designed to improve staff, student and school performance (leadership), routine maintenance of present operations (management) and lower order duties (administration).

Bush (2008a:276) identifies three main characteristics of leadership which are interrelated. These are:

- Leadership as influence.
- Leadership and values.
- Leadership and vision.

Influence

Most definitions of leadership reflect the assumption that it involves a social influence process whereby intentional control is exerted by one person (or group) over other people (or groups) to structure the activities and relationships in a group or organisation. Bush (2008a & 2003) observes that this widely accepted summary includes several key elements:

- The central concept is *influence* rather than *authority* (author's italic).

Both of these are dimensions of power but the latter tends to reside in formal positions, such as that of headteacher, whilst the former could be exercised by anyone in the school or college. In this sense, leadership is independent of positional authority whilst management is linked directly to it. Therefore there is need to "depersonalize leadership from individuals and relocate it as

a function of, and within, organizations" (Bennett and Anderson, 2003:3). In education, leaders are taken to be those in formally appointed role positions and also informal positions who exercise influence and provide direction to their colleagues (Bottery, 2004).

- The process is *intentional* (author's italic).

The person seeking to exercise influence is doing so in order to achieve certain purposes (Bush, 2008a). Similarly, Anderson (2003) emphasises that the definitions of leadership convey the idea of identifying a future state that is desired for the organisation as well as ways in which it can improve and move forward to this point. Managing on the other hand is about:

> The actual process of "moving the organisation along the path towards identified vision and involves putting structures and procedures in place and, then, enacting them through the people within the organisation to achieve improvement (Anderson, 2003:14).

Therefore, an effective leader must not only have an ability to identify the appropriate development path for the organisation to take but also have the skills that enable him or her to encourage the people to follow.

Equally, Goddard (2003:13) views leading as "the act of working with a group of individuals to achieve communal goals". There is no official authority in place and people listen to those with the best ideas, "not those with the biggest name tag". In this sense, leadership is a function in that it is only present when it is being exercised. Thus, as Leithwood and Jantzi (2008) argue, the most fundamental theoretical explanations for the importance of direction-setting practices on the part of leaders are goal-based theories of human motivation. They observe that according to such theory, people are

motivated by goals which they find personally compelling as well as challenging but achievable.

- Bush (2008a) points out that influence may be exercised by *groups* (author's italic) as well as individuals.

He notes that this notion provides support for constructs such as senior leadership teams as well as underpinning the notion of distributed leadership. This aspect of leadership portrays it as a fluid process, potentially emanating from any part of the school, independent of formal management positions and capable of residing with any member of the organization, including associate staff and students. Giving an example of a study conducted in the three Scandinavian countries, Møller (2009) points out that in Norway, school leadership is seen as a joint function of the leadership team and the teachers are expected to take significant responsibilities and decisions in their everyday class-related work as well.

In this sense, leadership is seen as a relationship between individuals in which influence and power are evenly distributed on a legitimate basis (Fiedler and Chemers, 1974). These writers observe that first, the power may be given to the leader by the consent of the group member(s), by a contractual work agreement, or by law, but it is for the leader to exercise. The second important thread is that there can be no leaders in isolation. If one wants to know whether s/he is a leader there should be people to be led (Anderson, 2003) and followers must explicitly or implicitly consent to their part in this influence relationship by relinquishing their right to make certain independent decisions (Fiedler and Chemers, 1974). Woods (2004)

expresses a similar view that leadership is not the actions of the leaders *per se*, but the interactions between leaders and other agents. He maintains that leadership is 'an influencing relation' between leaders and followers that takes place in situations that can be described by their tools, routines and structures.

In schools, Riley (2003:129) emphasises that school leadership is "an organic activity, dependent on interrelations and connections" where school principals are only one source of leadership, albeit a critical one. Teachers, governors and pupils all contribute to the leadership of a school. Similarly, Moos (2008) notes that there is an understanding that school principals cannot be sufficiently informed to make all decisions in schools, nor can they be present in all places and situations where decisions need to be made and therefore some decisions must be made by the teachers, and at times, by students as well as governors. School leadership, therefore, like any other type of leadership, requires a sense of understanding and involvement of students, teachers, the governing council and the local community, to achieve its goals (Leithwood, 2006).

Values

Leadership is increasingly linked with values and therefore leaders are expected to ground their actions in clear personal and professional values (Bush, 2008a). Bush points out that in England the dominant values and policies are those of government and that they are 'imposed' on school leaders. As such, the scope for leaders to act according to their own values is circumscribed by central power. He therefore maintains that leaders are

free to pursue their own values, but only if they are consistent with government policies.

Goddard (2003:13) expresses similar views when he argues that:

> In schools, leadership is both multidimensional and multifaceted, where the values, goals, beliefs and decision-making skills of the principal give purpose and meaning to the policies and procedures which she or he is duty-bound to implement.

Goddard contends that in most cases these policies and procedures together with the norms of the school context within which they are implemented are not set by the principal or the school but rather are established and affected by national, provincial, divisional and local pressure groups which therefore require a multiplicity of skills.

Vision

Bush (2008a & 2003) argues that vision is regarded as an essential component of effective leadership. He notes that outstanding leaders have a vision for their organizations and they are motivated to work hard 'because their leadership is the pursuit of their individual visions. That is:

> Successful leaders develop a vision for their schools based on their personal and professional values. They articulate this vision at every opportunity and influence their staff and other stakeholders to share the vision. The philosophy, structures and activities of the school are geared towards the achievement of this shared vision" (Bush, 2003:8).

Leithwood and Jantzi (2008:507) share similar views that a critical aspect of leadership is helping a group develop shared understandings about the organization and its activities and goals that can undergird a sense of purpose or vision. They assert that to the extent that visions are inspirational,

they should foster those emotional arousal processes antecedent to the development of efficacy beliefs.

Therefore, leadership is taken to mean a higher order set of tasks such as goal setting, visioning and motivating, whilst management is viewed as at a lower level concerned with maintenance of performance through supervision, coordination and control (Dimmock, 2002). Leadership is "not only a process geared towards the attainment of desired purposes but also involves inspiring and supporting others towards the achievement of visions for the school that is based on clear personal and professional values" (Bush and Glover, 2003:10). Bush and Glover view school management as the implementation of school policies and the efficient and effective maintenance of the school's activities. Coleman (2005) explains that one can be a leader without being a manager and the other way round. For example, one can fulfil many of the symbolic, inspirational educational and normative functions of a leader and thus represent what an organisation stands for without carrying out any of the formal functions of management. Conversely, one can monitor and control organisational activities, make decisions, and allocate resources without fulfilling the symbolic, normative, inspirational, or educational functions of leadership (Bottery, 2004; Strain, 2009).

Nevertheless, Bush (2008a) warns that studies have shown that, in most circumstances, school heads articulate visions that are in line with the country's education system and policies more than those specific to the schools. He, therefore, questions whether school leaders are able to develop

a specific vision for their schools, given government prescriptions about curriculum aims and content.

In Kenya, the Ministry of Education not only provides the curriculum and the syllabus but also provides a service charter that contains its values, vision, and mission (Republic of Kenya, 2007). All provincial and district education officers, as well as schools, are then expected to develop their own strategic plans based on the one from the Ministry of Education. This suggests that school leaders can hardly produce and follow their own vision. It becomes confusing, therefore, when the principals are required to develop their own ways of implementing and sustaining concepts such as democratic school leadership.

In this study, I use the term leadership in a broad sense that includes the management functions of school principals. This is because in Kenya, principals serve both leadership and management, with more emphasis on management responsibilities. My choice of the concept of leadership was also informed by the changing educational management context in Kenya such as the requirement that school leaders adopt more democratic practices in the schools. This puts pressure on principals to focus on leadership rather than management which, in turn, necessitate their own development.

Development and preparation of school leaders

There is an increasing recognition that preparing and developing school leaders cannot be left to chance (Bush, 2008b). Drawing on an assessment

conducted by Leithwood *et al.*(2006) in the UK, Bush emphasises that leadership is second only to classroom teaching as an influence on pupil learning, which leads to the need for principals and senior staff to undertake specific preparation for the distinctive role of educational leadership and management. Bush (2008b) argues that the once widely accepted view that teaching qualifications and experience alone provide a sufficient basis for school leaders is gradually being replaced by an understanding that headship is a specialist position that requires a different set of skills from those essential for classroom teachers. As Bennett and Anderson (2003:1) emphasise, the importance of leadership in the management and administration of educational organizations and systems is "reflected in both academic and educational policy statements throughout the English-speaking world". In England, for example, this is seen in the establishment of the National College for School Leadership in 2000 for training of headteachers and others in activities not directly related to curriculum and teaching (Bennett and Anderson, 2003; Anderson, 2003).

As a consequence, countries as diverse as Canada, England, France, Singapore, South Africa and the USA have introduced, or are piloting, mandatory qualifications for new school principals (Bush, 2008b). In the Scandinavian countries of Norway, Sweden and Denmark, Møller (2009) explains that the training of school leaders is now grounded in the view that school leadership should promote democracy as a fundamental social value and ethical guide to citizenship. She (2009:171) emphasises that the conception of school leadership has changed from the "old *primus inter pares* (first among equals) to being framed as a profession distinct from teaching".

Of interest to my study is the importance of leadership training for school principals. As discussed in chapter one, in Kenya there is no specialised training for principals and they are selected based on experience in the field as a teacher. Equally, principals' appointments are sometimes based on political and ethnic considerations (Harber, 2002; Republic of Kenya, 1999, 2001). It therefore becomes critical to find out how government policies, such as the implementation of democratic school leadership, are undertaken by the school principals who themselves have had no formal leadership training.

Democracy

The term democracy is a "hugely contested concept and fruitful discussion about its nature and connection with practices such as education needs to acknowledge very different traditions and allegiances" (Fielding, 2007:541). This requires more studies that unpack the different traditions and how they are practised in different contexts because, as Woods and Gronn (2009:432) point out, "there have always been different ways and means of being democratic or expressing democratic principles". Nevertheless, democracy has been defined as a system of government involving the whole population or all eligible members of a state, typically through elected representatives (Soanes and Stevenson, 2003). In this sense, Louis (2003:94-95) identifies three paradigms of democratic societies:

- Liberal democracy,
- Social democracy,
- Participatory democracy.

Louis observes that the philosophies of liberal democracy suggest that the purpose of society is to benefit the individual in his or her development. Public education is a priority in liberal democracies because of the polity's responsibility to support the individual in becoming autonomous, and in gaining "the good life". In liberal democratic societies, the role of the state is to ensure that family, subculture or community do not obstruct the child's chances for success and integration into the society. Educational goals are determined by the will of the majority. Similarly, Enslin (1999) argues that liberal democracy, which she remarks is culturally particular to the West, is premised on liberalism in which the focus is more on the individual than on society. She contends that since citizens of a liberal society do not hold a common conception of the 'good life', the government has no source from which it can legitimately derive substantive goals that go beyond creating a framework within which citizens can pursue their personal aspirations.

Social democracy emphasises social rights and equality and is identified with welfare states such as Norway, Sweden and Denmark (Louis, 2003). Its principles are most visible in movements that emphasise group cohesiveness and the importance of redistributing social goods, including education (Møller, 2009). Møller explains that it stresses the protection of vulnerable classes of students. That is, students of linguistic, religious and racial minorities require stable state control over goals. These countries also have a strong ideological tradition of emphasising the role of education institutions in the making of civic society. Møller adds that equity, participation and a welfare state are distinguishing features of these countries' model of education, and for them social democracy as a political movement and ideology has had

crucial impact on education. Therefore, they have a unique tradition of consensus seeking in both politics and education.

The philosophy of participatory democracy presumes participation and ownership, and is based on the Greek ideal of citizenship (Louis, 2003). Louis contends that it is viewed as most profoundly realised when all adult residents are engaged in debating and determining key issues. Under this conception schools 'belong' to an identified local community which is responsible for determining purpose and process. Participatory democracy thus values local responsiveness and supports the right of parents and other groups to develop publicly funded schools that meet specific local goals. Moos (2008) considers the concept of participatory democracy the most appropriate and useful in regard to schools because it calls on participants to strive to build communication around the ideal of the most persuasive argument that prevails without the use of coercion. In Participatory democracy, the participants in the educational project are best able to determine targets.

Louis (2003) points out that regardless of how distinctive these political philosophies are on paper, national and regional cultures are increasingly challenged by the rapid flow of political ideas through the media. Thus all developed countries share in the conversations reflected by the three models, to a greater or lesser extent. However, she rightly observes that every democratic system contains its own contradictions between beliefs and actions. She, therefore, warns that the mixing of policies based on different assumptions can cause policy dilemmas especially when an attractive goal,

articulated in the context of one set of democratic principles, is transplanted to another setting where its implementation may introduce dissonance in the existing values.

Louis' argument suggests that the adoption of democratic policies into contexts where cultural practices do not conform to democratic ideals can cause tension. This idea is important in this study because, after independence in 1964, the Kenyan Government adopted a 'democratic' political system that was 'handed over' by the British colonial government into a context that Kabeberi (2007:245) considers unfavourable culturally, socially and economically. She contends that the colonial system itself was not democratic and the cultural set-up did not favour the ideals of liberal democracy envisaged in the independent Kenya. However, democracy and democratic community is an ideal, a journey that is never completely realized but which constantly evolves (Bredeson, 2004; Woods, 2007) and therefore a new or foreign ideology can still be harmonised with a local culture with favourable result for the citizens (Kabeberi, 2007).

Kenya's 'democracy' is viewed more in terms of voting in general elections every five years. Whether the voters' verdicts are fully respected is another matter. Considering the close link between the society and schools, it is important to investigate how democratic values and practices are perceived by the principals, teachers and students and how these perceptions inform their practices in their schools. This is more so because, as Mncube (2009) argues, a more democratic system of education cannot be promoted without a democratic society. At the same time, without "a more democratic system

of education the development of a democratic society is unlikely to occur" (Mncube, 2009:31). Woods (2005:32) refers to this interlink between the schools and the society they inhabit as "double stranded connection". Thus, Woods points out that schools need to nurture tomorrow's democratic citizens but at the same time democratic society should, by its nature, enable schools to develop democratic cultures inclusive of all who work in or have a stake in them.

Democratic school leadership

Literature reveals that many ideas on democratic schooling are traced back to Dewey who inspired many theorists and practitioners (see Fielding, 2007; Gale and Densmore, 2003; Møller, 2006; Moos, 2008; San Antonio, 2008; Stromstad, 2003; Woods, 2006). Dewey (1916) argued that:

> A democracy is more than a form of government; it is primarily a mode of associated living, of conjoint communicated experience. The extension in space of the number of individuals who participate in an interest so that each has to refer his own action to that of others, and to consider the action of others to give point and direction to his own, is equivalent to the breaking down of those barriers of class, race and national territory which kept men from perceiving the full import of their activity (Dewey, 1916:87).

He noted further that:

> A society which makes provision for participation in its good of all its members on equal terms and which secures flexible readjustment of its institutions through interaction of the different forms of associated life is in so far democratic. Such a society must have a type of education which gives individuals a personal interest in social relations and control, and the habits of mind which secure social changes without introducing disorder (Dewey, 1916:99).

Dewey's argument suggests that democratic schooling means that democracy is lived through participation in the everyday practice of school life. Thus, individuals can only learn to understand themselves as democratic

individuals by becoming members of a community in which the problems of communal life are resolved through collective deliberation and a shared concern for the common good. Therefore, democratic schooling, this cannot be achieved in the absence of democratic school leadership. Drawing on Dewey's idea of democratic schooling, Gale and Densmore (2003) stress the need for school leaders to employ participatory approaches and democratic leadership to develop a democratic society. Democracy in schools is, therefore, a situation where "people are participating and are empowered to make decisions concerning themselves" (Stromstad, 2003:33). It is also viewed as a form of social living in which individuals live and conduct their affairs within a sense of belonging to a community that exercises mutual care for its members (Starratt, 2004).

Essentially, democratic school leadership is concerned with the cultivation of an environment that supports participation, sharing of ideas, and the virtues of honesty, openness, flexibility, and compassion (Starratt, 2001). According to Furman and Starrat (2002:118), it requires the ability to "listen, understand, empathise, negotiate, speak, debate and resolve conflicts in a spirit of interdependence and working for the common good". It also involves taking a stance towards participation and decision-making and establishing conditions that foreground "respectful relationships, associations, consideration, consultation, empathy and active cooperation and community mobilisation" (Gale and Densmore, 2003:132).

The foregoing literature highlights the need for students' and teachers' involvement in decision-making and participation in the affairs of the school,

either individually or as a group, for the school leadership to be considered democratic. It also points to the need for structures through which students' and teachers' views can be included in the decision-making process in the school. Equally, it emphasises that democracy and by extension democratic school leadership is a continuum, an ideal that can hardly be absolutely realised.

However, the conceptions of democracy discussed by Louis focuses more on what Woods (2004:18) refers to as "constitutionalism" (democracy as a rule) which "claims to solve the problems of how to know, giving privileged status to founding ideas and institutional arrangements". Woods argues in favour of democratic school leadership that is not only perceived in terms of participation and electing representatives but as:

> opportunities for shared engagement in loose-structured creative spaces where hierarchy and assumptions of knowledge are minimized, so as to encourage the emergence of new questions, challenging cultural comparisons and connections, and differing, marginalized perspectives (Woods, 2004:18).

In other words, Woods suggests the need for a developmental conception of democratic practice which I discuss next.

A developmental conception of democratic practice

Woods (2004, 2005, 2006), and Woods and Woods (2008) view a developmental conception of democratic practice as a broader way of looking at democracy and democratic school leadership than the narrow view which consists of voting regularly for leaders whom, in the voters' judgement, best protects their interests. Woods (2006) argues that the latter conception tends to make democracy an activity relatively distant from schooling and education. He refers to this conception of democracy as "liberal minimalism" (2005:5) and maintains that a focus solely on practices could portray schools as mechanical systems with interchangeable practices and activities designed for maximum efficiency, which should not be the case.

Woods and Woods (2008) consider that an expansive, developmental conception of democracy and democratic leadership is the model most relevant to education. They point out that the model can be summarised in terms of six interlinking aims (rationalities). These aims "analytically distinguish the complementary and interacting dimensions of democratic leadership and practice and have their own distinctive focus, priorities and consequences" (Woods, 2006:328) even though the rationalities are not mutually exclusive (see figure 1). The six interlinking aims comprise: human potential, ethical rationality, discursive rationality, decisional rationality, therapeutic rationality and social justice.

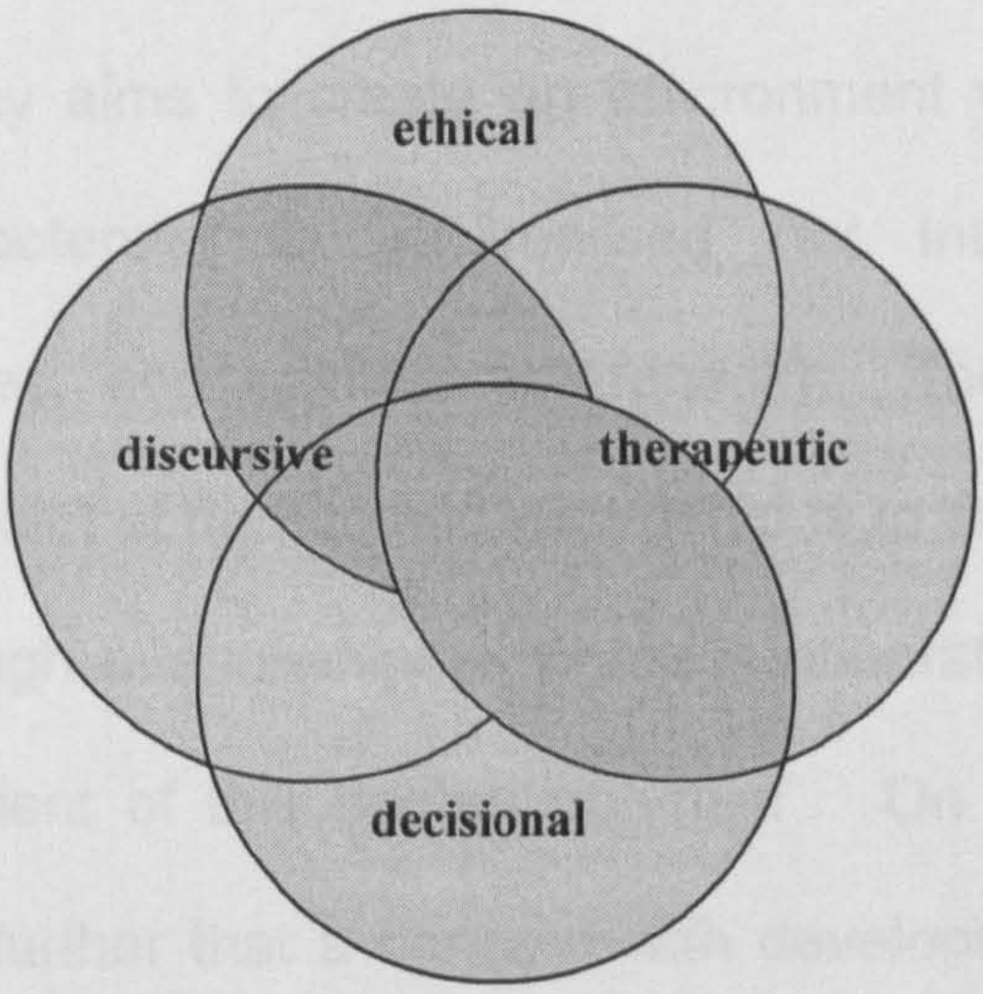

Figure 1: Rationalities of developmental conception of democratic practice (source, Woods, 2005:12)

In discussing each of the aims (and/or rationalities) I relate them to the elements of democratic school leadership in practice as discussed by Møller (2006) in a study she conducted in a school in Norway.

At the end of the next sections in which I discuss each rationality, I pose questions that I use to guide my data collection process. These questions inform the development of interview guides for the teachers and principals as well as the focus group discussion for the students. As seen in appendices Three, Four and Five, these are not the direct questions that I ask in the interviews and focus group discussions. Therefore, through these broad questions, I am able to maintain the focus of the interviews and discussions with the students.

Development of human potential

Woods and Woods (2008) observe that the developmental conception of democracy aims to create an environment which enables the capacity for human potential to be realised (for intellectual reasoning, aesthetic sensibilities, and spiritual awareness). They (2008:102) argue that "the primary point of democratic leadership is to strive towards a way of living – in and through relationships – which is orientated toward cultivating the fullest development of this human potential". On this basis, Woods and Woods contend further that a concern with developing the human potential of both students and staff is central to its educational approach. Thus it is based on the educational philosophy that human development involves awakening, in a balanced way, the range of human faculties (cognitive, affective, and creative). In a sense, the concern to enable human potential to be realised entails a collective obligation to create economic and social conditions which enable everyone to participate and work toward their potential.

Starratt (2004) advances a similar argument, that in a democratic school the academic curriculum becomes the carrier of transformative learning experiences. He observes that it enables students to learn to construct their identities, their sense of themselves as cultured beings, as political beings and, most of all, as human beings challenged by their enormous potential for good as well as their need for the support and compassion of their fellows. Starratt maintains that a democratic school leader should realise that a democratic way of life depends on the human potential for good, as well as the need for support and compassion, and will create learning opportunities for young people to enrich that potential and to support that need. For this

study, as seen in my interview guide, and focus group discussion guide (Appendices three, four and five), I sought to establish from the teachers and students the opportunities provided for them in the school to construct their identity and exploit fully their potential. That is:

- What opportunities are provided for the teachers' professional as well as personal development?
- Do the teachers feel they are fully supported by the school administration and colleagues to develop their potential? How is this achieved?
- Do students feel that they have opportunities in the schools to develop and exploit their full potential? How is this achieved?

Ethical rationality

Ethical rationality aims to create an environment in which people are encouraged and supported in aspiring to 'truths' about the world (Woods and Woods, 2008). Woods and Woods observe that the expression and reinforcement of a commitment to an aspiration to 'truth', which Woods (2006:331) refers to as "the kernel of ethical rationality", are integral to the development of human potential. Hence, one of the functions of leadership in a democratic school is to "engage people in processes that cause them to construct new knowledge" (ibid). He points out that such a commitment to truth needs to appreciate both the existence of positive potential, and that humans are capable of making mistakes, as well as the significance of the social dimension to the development and testing of knowledge. Woods emphasises that a headteacher of a democratically managed school explains

the importance of the collaborative approach in terms of finding the right way for this group and the best ideas.

In his earlier works, Starratt (1991) identified three types of ethics in organisations which can be related to Woods' ethical rationality. These are: the ethic of critique, ethic of justice and ethic of care, each of which complements the others in a developmental context of practice. Each of them contributes an ethical perspective on policy choices, although as none of them compels selection in every instance, a perfect solution does not exist. They do, however, enable one to make choices with the consequences more clearly delineated, to move toward the 'best' alternative under the circumstances, or to a selection that, although it favours one ethical demand, will probably be balanced later on by other choices Starratt (1991).

Similarly, Begley and Zaretsky (2004:641) also contend that "our rational professional justifications for democratic leadership in schools are grounded in the nature of the school leadership role, the social contexts of the communities, as well as an ideological social mandate". The payoff to this form of leadership occurs when understanding the value orientations of others provides leaders with information on how they might best influence the practices of others towards the achievement of broadly justifiable social objectives.

Stefkovich and Begley (2007) also emphasise that the application of ethics focuses on building consensus around a shared social objective in schools. However, they warn that because ethics are often interpreted in culturally exclusive ways, and do not require empirical evidence to justify their adoption,

they can be a very troublesome category of values to employ as guides to action in culturally diverse schools and communities. This is because school administrators increasingly sense the need to be accountable for their decisions. Thus, school administrators naturally gravitate towards values grounded in rational consequences and consensus as guides to action and decision making whenever that is possible.

In a study conducted in Norway, Møller (2006) identifies an ethic of care and a concern for the common good as elements of democratic school leadership. She points out that they concern how the students feel the teachers relate to them as well as how students and teachers relate among themselves. The ethic of care seeks to establish whether the students feel that the teachers trust them and express a caring attitude towards them and how safe students feel in the school. It encourages teachers and students to accept one another for who they are and treat them as much. Møller observes that it also requires the principal to talk with the teachers about almost everything that is going on in the school and care for the staff members. It is important that the principal organises social events to develop a shared feeling for the school.

Overall, Woods (2006:329) makes clear that:

> Ethical rationality is 'first amongst equals' amongst the democratic rationalities. The primary point of a democratic order is not solely to enable participation by all in the decisions that affect them, but to strive towards a way of living which is orientated towards the values that ultimately represent human progress and goodness. The fact that these are contested and cannot be expressed in a final, unquestionable form, and still less translated unproblematically into action, means that it is vital that ethical rationality is embedded in the other democratic rationalities.

For my study, it was important to find out if the students and teachers felt there was an ethic of care, justice and concern for them in the school. Therefore, as seen in Appendices three, four and five, some of the questions I focused on in the interviews and focus group discussions were:

- Do the teachers care for each another and how do they demonstrate this?
- Do the teachers care for students and how do they demonstrate this?
- Do the students care for each other and how do they demonstrate this?
- Do the teachers and students take responsibility for one another and how do they demonstrate this?
- How do the principal and teachers recognise the basic value of each individual in the school?

Discursive rationality

Discursive rationality, according to Woods and Woods (2008), aims to create a climate where exchange and exploration of views and open debate are possible. It is about "open debate and the operation of dialogic and deliberative democracy" (Woods, 2006:323). Thus, it allows for the open debate of alternative interpretations and perspectives recognising their moral basis and for seeking consensus on what would constitute appropriate action supported by good reasons. In school, Woods points to Trafford's (2003) emphasis on power sharing, noting that in school democracy, the free exchange of ideas, which means seeking out and facilitating expression of views from teachers, students and parents, is essential. Woods (2005)

argues further that discursive rationality is integral to an active democracy, recognising that answers are not clear-cut, even if they are ethical or scientific or technological in nature.

Dialogue is, therefore, an essential activity rather than an optional feature in democratic schools and is used in sorting out issues that arise in the school (Harber and Meighan, 1989). As such, the teachers must develop trust in the capability and creative ability of students to engage them in useful dialogue. According to Furman and Starratt (2002), a forum for democratic community should be based on the acceptance and celebration of differences rather than striving for homogeneity, and include key concepts like interdependence and the common good. They underscore the need for a strong moral sense as a basic component of a democratic community including schools that value dialogue, open inquiry and critique, a respect for individuals and the interdependence of all. Consequently, democratic school leaders should engage the teachers, students and school boards in constant dialogue to sustain democratic values and goals in the school and larger society (Bredeson, 2004). Bredeson maintains that democratic schools, like democracy itself, do not happen by chance but result from explicit attempts by educators to put in place arrangements and opportunities for dialogue that will bring democracy.

Cook-Sather (2006) notes that in promoting dialogue, school leaders should learn that to listen to students means learning not to speak *for* them but speak *with* them. She explains that the former is often the practice. Speaking with students is a very special kind of listening, "listening that requires not only

open eyes and ears but also open hearts and minds" (Cook-Sather, 2006:349). Therefore, as Fielding (2004) suggests, the promise of a dialogic model and the potential for transformation is more likely to reside in arrangements which require the active engagement of students and teachers working in partnership than in those which exclude teachers and students.

In a sense, discursive rationality can be linked to Møller's (2006) establishment of arenas for collaboration, negotiation and creating opportunity for open dialogue among the staff and students. She argues that although representative democracy might be enacted through the student council at a school, a more important element of democratic schooling is associated with the activities in classrooms (Møller, 2006). In this way dialogue is extended to class activities as well as outside the class. She notes that schools which have an explicit purpose of preparing students for democracy should operate in ways that demonstrate belief in such collective participation, particularly when it comes to the control of classroom activities. It also highlights how the teachers discuss and collaborate with their colleagues to make their teaching more effective and productive. Collaboration can take place at subject level or any other unit within the school. Apart from collaborating at the subject level for effective teaching, Wise (2003:131) highlights that a subject can also provide an additional source of dialogue and identity for teachers over and above that of a teacher. Therefore, it becomes necessary to examine the dynamics of departmental leadership from the point of view of the subject unit as a community of practice, and consider the implications this might have for the role of the subject leaders.

Møller (2006) considers creating opportunities for open dialogue among staff and students as a situation where, although the principal is in charge as the school's manager, s/he needs to work closely with the deputies and other teachers. Møller argues that a focus on developing a democratic community entails acknowledging that schools are sites of cultural and political struggles, and it is important to support interactions, negotiations and dialogue that are characterized and distinguished by mutual trust and respect. The principal creates time to meet both formally and informally with the teachers and they collaborate on a daily basis, sharing ideas about the school's long-term development.

In my interviews, focus group discussions and observations, I therefore sought to establish the extent to which school leaders and teachers engaged students in dialogue both within and outside the classroom. Equally, it was important to establish how the school leaders engaged teachers in dialogue and how the teachers engaged one another in dialogue in their departments and across departments. That is:

- How do teachers and school administrators engage students in dialogue both within and outside the class?
- How do the teachers engage one another in dialogue within the school?
- How much control do students have in designing the activities in the school?
- How do teachers involve students in their lessons?
- Do teachers discuss with their colleagues their teaching approaches and how? If not, why not?

- Do the principal and teachers take the standpoints of others into consideration when making decisions, and how? If not, why not?
- Are there deliberations in the school before decisions are made in the school? If not, why?

Decisional rationality

Decisional rationality aims to disperse decision-making so that people are active contributors to the creation of the institutions, culture and relationships they inhabit (Woods and Woods, 2008; Woods, 2004, 2005, 2006). It concerns rights to participate, "including rights to select representatives and to be involved in decision-making and hold power-holders to account" (Woods, 2006:323). Woods contends that decisional rationality is about the rights to participate in and affect collective, organisational decision-making. It is also about who counts in decision-making, who is accountable and to whom. He points out that there is the simple fact that being affected by decisions provides a case for participation.

Decisional rationality is also concerned with enabling people to make choices and decisions that are rightfully theirs and to create and develop their own opinions, sense of identity and relationships (Woods, 2005). In essence, it is about power and freedom from arbitrary and imposed rule by others and from the imposition of others' values, enabling the exercise of individual liberty and identities through diversity. Woods (2005:14) argues further that in order to take the character of decisional rationality, democratic school leadership needs to display several characteristics including:

- *dispersal of leadership* throughout the organisation, which leaders work to recognise and enhance,
- *decisional rights*, which are not the same as consultation, but involves rights to vote, initiate or approve certain decisions and to hold power-holders to account,
- *dampening of power differences*, whereby practical day-to-day power differences between individuals, hierarchically organised posts or stakeholder groups such as educational professionals, students and parents are not allowed to undermine effective participation.

The need for people to participate in decisions that affect them in democratic organisations has been discussed by other scholars as well. For example, Harber and Meighan (1989) argue that democratic school leadership depends on the degree of student power over decision making. The decisions need not concern only the classroom learning but the whole school environment, involving such matters as punishments and rewards, styles of dress and organisation of the timetable. They emphasise that in democratic education, the learners as a group have power to make some, most or all decisions since power is shared among everybody in the school and not appropriated in advance by a minority.

In Johansson's (2001) view, by participating in discussions on planning and evaluation of their daily education, and exercising choices over courses, subjects and activities, students will develop their ability to exercise influence and take responsibility. This underlies the need for students' and teachers' contribution to decision-making, curriculum development and issues of

governance within the school and the extension of the same beyond school and classroom (Frost, 2008).

In her study, Møller (2006) underscores the value of enhancing dialogue through encouraging student voice in decision-making. Student voice focuses on the many ways in which the students can actively participate in the school decisions that will shape their lives (Fielding 2001; Mitra 2006). Mitra emphasises that when put into practice, student voice at the most basic level can consist of young people sharing their opinions of problems and potential solutions on issues in the school. Literature reveals that one of the ways of getting student voice heard in school is through the students' council (Stromstad, 2003; Trafford, 2003; Leren, 2006; Møller, 2006). Møller (2006:62) maintains that the students' council should play a key role in the decision-making processes in the school and not just be for "window dressing for an outside world".

Stromstad (2003) observes that each class in the school should have a council whose responsibility is to promote the interests of all students in the class and, in cooperation with teachers and parents, work to create a satisfactory learning environment. "Such openness is not easy and perhaps demanding of staff, but is necessary in order to cultivate an understanding of diversity as natural and normal" (Stromstad, 2003:37). That is, although teachers may find it difficult allowing students to fully participate in making decisions in the school, it is important that the school develops a culture of accepting diverse opinions from students. She suggests that schools, being a preparation for life in society where people are expected to live and develop

together, should have practical knowledge in democratic principles on how decisions are taken, respected and lived up to. Similarly, Leren (2006) asserts that in some schools, the students' council is a permanent way of organising the students' voice and provides a high level of influence in the decision-making processes.

Consequently, the development of participative decision-making at the school level allows young people to express what they (students) consider to be important and valuable about their learning (Smyth, 2006). Allowing students the opportunity to participate in decision-making also helps improve their skills and clarify their needs as learners (Cook-Sather, 2006) and helps in creating self confidence in them (Leren, 2006). It also makes the students feel they belong (therapeutic rationality, discussed in the next subsection) and find their realities reflected in the curriculum and conversations of schooling (Angus, 2006).

For my study, the questions arising from the foregoing discussion which I explored in my interviews and focus group discussions are:

- How much do students participate in decision-making in the schools?
- What kinds of decisions do students participate in and why those specific ones?
- What is the nature of their participation?
- Do students feel that their decisions are taken seriously by the teachers and school administrations, why do they think so?
- How much do teachers participate in decision-making in the schools and what is the nature of their participation?

Therapeutic rationality

According to Woods and Woods (2008), developmental democracy also aims to enhance therapeutic rationality whereby people are empowered and enabled by the institutional, cultural and social structures of the organisation. Therapeutic rationality concerns the creation of well-being, social cohesion and positive feelings of involvement through participation and shared leadership (Woods, 2005). Woods explains that whilst it is orientated towards the interior well-being of the person, it recognises the intimate connection between external social relationships, "the symbols and messages conveyed by formal and informal social arrangements that encourage or discourage participation, the way differences in power and authority are made manifest - and the internal world of the person" (Woods, 2005:15). Woods points out that democratic participation of students and teachers in school affairs greatly enhances their self-esteem which, in turn, ensures their commitment to their duties and obligations in the schools.

In Møller's (2006) study, therapeutic rationality can be identified in the self satisfaction and esteem that results from students' and teachers' participation in decision-making in the school. This is because, as Woods maintains, participation in school affairs has a positive impact on both the students and teachers.

The need for therapeutic rationality in a school is also captured in Riley's (2004:07) argument that if students are disaffected by the school, then they view the school as "boring, hazardous, demeaning and a joyless experience". However, Riley argues that this kind of feeling can change if students

participate more because participation has a positive emotional impact on them and the teachers as well. Similarly, Frost (2008) explains that student participation in school affairs and having opportunities to exercise responsibility enhances the quality of learning through improvements in communication. These social conditions of learning also improve self-esteem, heighten self-confidence, interpersonal skills and self efficacy. However, this is not confined to students alone but also includes all staff.

From this discussion, the questions arising in this study are:

- How often does the principal meet the teachers formally and informally?
- How often do the principal and the teachers meet the students informally?
- To what extent does the principal collaborate with other staff on different issues that arise in the school?
- Do the teachers feel that their personal and professional interests are cared for in the school?
- Do the students feel they value the school, and why so?
- Do students feel they are valued in the school and why so?

Social justice

Developmental democracy also aims to promote social justice by engendering respect for diversity and reducing cultural and material inequalities (Woods and Woods, 2008). Woods and Woods argue that the concern to enable human potential to be realised entails a collective

obligation to create economic and social conditions which enable everyone to participate and work towards their potential. Social justice is about fair and just distribution of resources, respect and opportunities, as well as the eradication of social patterns of exploitation, domination and denigration (Woods, 2005).

Drawing on works by Cribb and Gewirtz (2003), Woods (2005:17) observes that social justice can be distributive, cultural and associational. Distributive justice is the absence of unjustified socio-economic inequalities, including exploitation, economic marginalisation and deprivation. It (distributive justice) also aims to minimize wide disparities in access to resources such as information and advice which enable people to locate and negotiate service provision. Cultural justice is concerned with the absence of cultural domination and disrespect, thus if an emphasis on cultural justice is present then there is respect for differences and the emphasis of democracy is unity as human beings. Associational justice is the absence of patterns of association amongst individuals and among social groups which prevent some people from participating fully in decisions which affect the conditions within which they live and act.

As seen in fig.2, Woods (2206) points out that each of the models of affects the capacity for democracy and participation in democratic leadership and therefore a conceptual overlap is evident through associational justice.

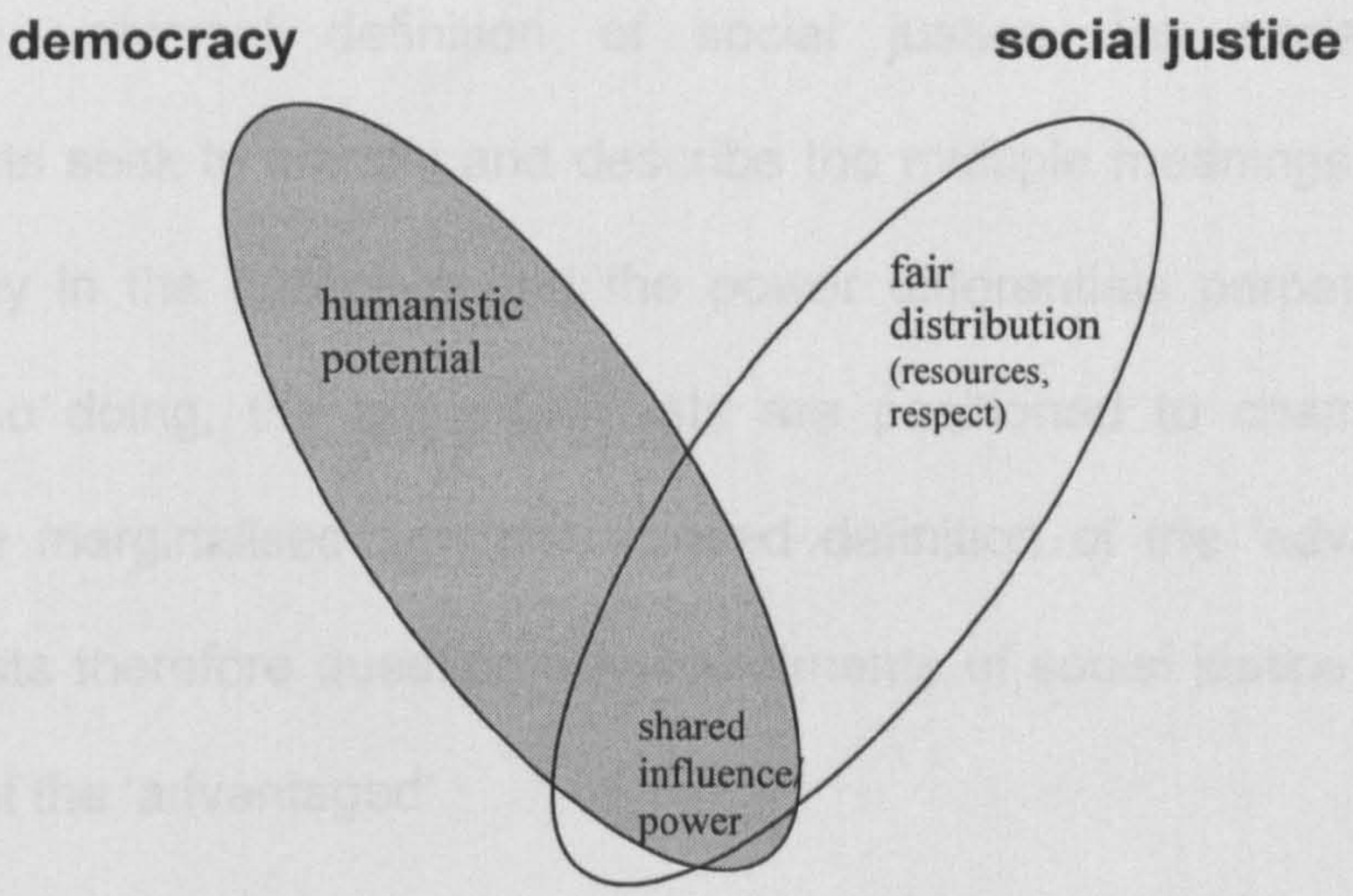

Figure 2: Respective centres of gravity of democracy and social justice (source: Woods 2005: 16)

Shields and Mohan (2008) hold a similar view, that if the purpose of schooling is not only to help students to achieve individual success and subsequent employment but also to form the basis of a robust civil society, then schools must provide safe spaces and education that promotes change to a more equitable and just society. They contend that educators cannot ignore the power imbalances and disparities that sustain much socio-cultural and economic inequality today or the multiple forms of social, cultural and economic capital their students bring into their schools. Thus educators must take steps to provide an education that both challenges and overcomes inequities by offering equitable access to equal opportunities for all. They assert that teachers can and should develop pedagogical understandings and strategies that make the classroom more inclusive, more equitable, and that make it a training ground for democratic citizenship.

Questions are, however, raised about what constitutes social justice. For example, Johnson (2008:311) contends that postmodern concerns reject claims of a universal definition of social justice. He explains that postmodernists seek to identify and describe the multiple meanings of social justice at play in the collective and the power differentials perpetuated by these. By so doing, the postmodernists are positioned to champion the voices of the marginalised against imposed definition of the 'advantaged'. Postmodernists therefore question any enactments of social justice from the perspective of the 'advantaged'.

Interpretivists also reject claims of, and the search for, a universal definition of social justice (Johnson, 2008). While they identify points of interpretive convergence between members of the collective, interpretivists see the search for a universal definition of social justice as misguided. Instead their interest lies in identifying the meanings of social justice at play in the collective. They attempt to enhance the stability of the collective by moving toward a consensual definition of social justice and therefore encourage a culture of dialogue. Educational leaders who are interpretive in orientation are concerned with discerning the competing interpretive realities held by organizational participants and negotiating a consensus among these so that the work of the organisation can be done.

Despite the varied views based on different paradigms, Shields and Mohan (2008) emphasise that consideration of students' lived experiences will help teachers to understand that some children live transient lives with no permanent dwelling to call home (and few material advantages), whilst others

have enjoyed numerous enrichment opportunities. Learning to differentiate based on students' needs is therefore fundamental to providing all students with appropriate instruction and more equitable learning opportunities.

Similar arguments are advanced by Bredeson (2004), Mullen and Jones (2008) and Pryor (2008). For example, Bredeson (2004) observes that democratic school leaders should essentially work in two basic roles – creator and dismantler – to provide equitable opportunity, access, and outcomes for all members of the school community. As a 'creator', the principal is responsible for creating just, fair and humane conditions, processes, and structures that provide equitable opportunity, access and experiences for everyone in their schools. As a 'dismantler' such a principal needs to challenge inequities and disrupt the sources and systems that contribute to those injustices.

In her study, Møller (2006) considers that social justice focuses on the understanding by the principal and teachers that for students to become good citizens in the future, they (principal and teachers) must be concerned about the students' well-being. For example, if some students have problems at home, the school should still exploit their potential to make a difference to such students. It also focuses on how the school succeeds in taking care of all students, regardless of their socio-economic or cultural background and abilities. Fulfilling such a mission requires a continuous team effort, and both the leaders and the teachers should believe they could make a difference in their students' lives (Møller, 2006).

Based on these discussions, the questions that informed my interviews, focus group discussions and observations are:

- How do the principal and teachers make sure that they provide 'good' learning opportunities to all the students?
- How do the principals ensure the well being of the students and staff?
- How do the principals and teachers take good care of students despite the students' socioeconomic back ground and ability in school?
- How do the principals and teachers make sure that they provide a safe and sound learning and working environment for all?

Woods and Woods (2008) also highlight the significance of a cultural framework in people's actions and attitudes as participatory agents in a democratic school leadership which I discuss next.

Culture and school leadership

Culture has been defined as the enduring sets of beliefs, values and ideologies underpinning structures, processes and practices that distinguish one group of people from another either at organizational level (for example, a school) or at national level (Walker and Dimmock, 2002). These writers, however, warn that it may be difficult and unrealistic to expect universal agreement on precisely what the term means. They point out that some scholars prefer to preserve the term for those values and beliefs that are enduring and long established, while others are prepared to include modern values and to distinguish them from the traditional.

Culture can be identified at organisational level (organisational culture), national level (national culture) and societal or community level (societal culture). Organisational culture refers to a case where an organisation such as a school establishes its own way of handling various operations internally. It is usually applied to individual organisations rather than to nation-states (Dimmock and Walker, 2002). Bush and Anderson (2003:89) identify four features that may contribute to the individual culture as: "shared values, shared norms and meanings, rituals and ceremonies, and heroes and heroines". They argue that the values and beliefs of members of an organisation underpin their behaviour and attitude but may not always be explicit. In this way, organisational culture always influences the way members interpret the events in the organisation and the behaviour of its members.

Consequently, the combination of values, beliefs, rituals and symbols that represent the specific culture of each school differentiates it from other schools, even those in the immediate vicinity (Bush and Haiyan, 2002). Bush and Haiyan point out that the emphasis on organisational culture has been accompanied by a heightened appreciation of the importance of context in assessing educational policies, leadership and practice. They maintain that the previous assumption of generic leadership skills that could be applied to all educational contexts is increasingly being replaced by recognition of the importance of organisational variables and the need for situational analysis. Thus, the notion that each school is unique underpins and supports the growing significance of organisational culture (Dimmock and Walker, 2005).

National culture relates to national practices, values, ideologies and beliefs that are common in nation-states that govern their way of behaving (Dimmock and Walker, 2005). National practices often vary from one country to another. This is because some countries have undergone more political and economic changes than others (Bush and Haiyan, 2002). Bush and Haiyan add that each is at a different stage of political and cultural change and evolution. Nevertheless, Dimmock (2002) argues that the distribution and exercise of power in the school system, to an extent, may reflect and mirror that in the wider national society. He observes that national cultures may provide codes that make up the way that organizations, including schools, operate. Therefore, what researchers observe and conclude within particular settings may be reflective of national cultures and expectations.

Community culture refers to the cultural practices of specific communities. In Kenya there are over 42 ethnic communities some with distinctive cultural practices different from other communities (Sobania, 2003). Thus, apart from political factors such as the national anthem and national flag 'created' after independence, there hardly exists what can be considered a national culture. Kiswahili, which is a national language, is identified with specific ethnic communities for whom it is a native language. The lack of a 'deeply' rooted national culture can be attributed to the arbitrary way the colonial government subdivided the East African region into different colonies to suit their administration structure. Thus there are ethnic communities which live across borders between different countries, for example, the Maasai and Kuria in Tanzania and Kenya, The Luo, Luhya and Teso in both Uganda and Kenya

and so on. These community cultures are therefore more recognised and cohesive than national culture.

Relevance of culture to democratic school leadership

The concept of culture has become increasingly important in the discourse of educational leadership and management (Bush and Haiyan, 2002). As Heck (2002) argues, currently the field of education administration lacks cross-cultural models and theoretical frameworks for comparing schools and school systems internationally. Heck notes that whilst there are several well defined conceptual frameworks for studying school leadership supported by empirical evidence, researchers know less about how the wider socio-cultural context affects leadership and other school processes. He suggests that the cultural lens may illuminate previously unnoticed aspects of school leadership, including the manner by which societal norms shape and support the practice of school leaders.

Equally, cultural frameworks show that certain values, assumptions and ideas about the world are strongly embedded in the cultural framework which sets the context for the students and staff of any school and their agency (Woods and Woods, 2008). Woods and Woods consider shared philosophy, shared language and the valuing of freedom of interpretation as some of the components of culture that are important in a democratic spirit in school. They explain that *shared philosophy* (authors' italics) recognises holistic capacities of people and their equal potential to develop these and contribute to ethical insight. *Shared language* (authors' italics) is a unifying feature

within the school community and enables teachers to express and give value to the key tasks within the school. *Valuing of freedom of interpretation* (authors' italics) refers to fact that the various views expressed by people in the school suggest that divergent views are accommodated. And, *shared valuation of bringing spiritual awareness into everyday actions and decision-making* (authors' italics) concerns a key task of teachers as teachers and co-leaders.

Woods and Woods suggest that the cultural framework sets parameters, provides ideas and a language, and gives a strong steer through the shared philosophy, but within that philosophy there is an emphasis on individuals making sense of things themselves. "This is an important aspect of collective aspiration to good decision-making, relevant to everyone whenever they are participating in the school's leadership and management" (Woods and Woods, 2008:108).

The significance of a cultural framework is that people's actions and attitudes as participatory agents are, in part, fuelled by ideas (Woods and Woods, 2008). Woods and Woods add that the ideas in which a school is grounded, and the discourse (shared language) that comes to be taken as a natural part of its life are hugely significant for its democracy. Thus, as Dimmock and Walker (2005) emphasise, in much the same way that society at large possesses distinctive cultures, so do organizations such as schools and businesses. Organisations develop their own set of values and priorities, their myths, legends and ways of doing things. Just as in society as a whole, some in the organization may deliberately and consciously cultivate and

perpetuate certain cultural features. This serves to unite the members of the organization and to create synergy. It is also a means to "distinguish the organization from the others, and to give it an identity to which members feel they can belong" (Dimmock and Walker, 2005:11).

Dimmock and Walker maintain that the reality of school life results from the complex interplay of cultural elements from society and locality on the one hand and organisational culture on the other. The sets of dimensions associated with each of these enables comparisons of schools between or within different societies, as well as comparisons within particular multi-ethnic school communities. They explain that varying societal cultural configurations can exert significant influence on the school organisation structures, leadership, management, decision-making, curriculum and teaching/ learning processes. Consequently, there is an emerging literature pointing to the need to situate educational leadership research within specific cultural and socio-political contexts to identify the possible influences of these factors on school leadership.

On democratic school leadership, Woods (2006) observes that school culture re-centred on democracy has implications for how knowledge and learning are understood and constructed. He contends that a school culture that takes seriously the implications of developmental democracy profoundly challenges those in senior leadership positions and, indeed, anyone like teachers or school governors, in positions of authority. Similarly, Johansson (2004:623) asserts that the "principals must be able to formulate and motivate decisions in educational questions based on the school's cultural values" and to

develop a democratic school, the principal must nurture the cultural ethos - vision, aims, purpose and values - as well as set up the structures. Heck (2002) also considers that whilst overseeing the school governance processes (such as making decisions, solving problems, implementing policies) may be a common component of the school principal's role, whether or not parents, teachers and students are involved in decision-making may be more culturally specific behaviour.

In Kenya and many other traditional African societies, children are socialised to listen and take instructions from adults. They are not expected to challenge any authority at the homestead which largely resides with the father. Both young people and women are expected to express divergent views in a manner that does not threaten the authority of the men. Nangoli (2002:89) explains that: "children are not expected to talk back at adults in African society. It's a cardinal sin for a child to engage in arguments or cross words with his elders." The same applies to girls who are considered 'temporary' members of their families because they are expected to get married and leave their homes, and also because their place is traditionally exclusively in the kitchen (Nangoli, 2002).

Otula (2007) observes that such cultural practices are changing with time, but their traces are still strong in many organisations including schools. Many school principals and teachers in general still disapprove of any challenge from students who they expect to obey their orders without questioning. At the same time principals are under pressure from the government and global

influences, seen in international treaties on the rights of the child, to adopt a more democratic approach to leadership.

Therefore, in seeking to investigate the students', teachers' and principals' perceptions of democratic school leadership and how these perceptions informed their practices in secondary schools in Kenya, I also highlighted situations and practices in the schools that seemed directly or indirectly linked to both school and community cultures.

School leadership in Africa

Literature on school leadership and management in Africa tends to link management styles and approaches to the existing system of government in specific countries and the policies that they proclaim (Eslin 1999; Harber 1997 & 2002). Much of the research relating to school leadership, teachers and principals focuses on the primary level of education, leaving a relatively sparse literature on the secondary sector (Mulkeen *et al.*, 2005 and 2007). Equally, more than in any other continent, much of the literature that exists is on education in general and not school leadership. Therefore, although my study is on democratic school leadership, the literature covered here is on general educational leadership.

In many African countries, education management is mainly centralised, with decisions affecting schools largely made by the central government (Oplatka, 2004) therefore constraining the school principals' autonomy. He explains that in some countries like Nigeria and Ghana, the central government is

responsible for many aspects of educational management. The Ministry of Education designs a unified national curriculum, syllabi, learning materials and examinations and is in charge of funding and staffing of schools including teacher recruitment and development. He laments that the trend of the central government handling all these duties is likely to limit the roles and functions of principals who may move more towards administrative functions, lack of innovation and reactive management.

Oplatka highlights the situation in Ghana where principals are too often compulsorily transferred to other schools without taking into consideration the individual principal's willingness to move. He also claims that there is a narrow definition of the role of principals which is largely expressed by the emphasis on administrative–managerial functions with little attention to leadership.

Regarding democracy, Harber (2002) argues that actual regime transitions to democracy in Africa have been patchy in their success, with some newly elected leaders rapidly reverting to the more established authoritarianism, patrimonialism and clientelism. He maintains that the way politics operate in Africa means that there is little chance of success for the institutionalisation of democracy, including that of schools. And, because the skills and values of democracy are socially learned and not genetic, Harber (2002:273) expresses the need for "African schools and education systems to play a part in fostering the knowledge, skills and values necessary to promote and protect a democratic political culture". He observes that schools in Africa have traditionally tended to promote authoritarian values and practices in line with

the local traditional culture. Harber maintains that the schools have not encouraged participation, debate, responsibility and critical enquiry and have preferred instead to use chalk and talk, rote memorisation.

Harber (1997:8) mentions that, in some countries such as Nigeria and Kenya, secondary schools "have regularly experienced violent student disturbances" as a result of authoritarian organization of schooling which sometimes leads to poor communication, poor decisions based on insufficient consultation, which encourages dependence and passivity rather than independence and self discipline. Therefore, problems arise when issues occur in school which make students anxious and because there is no participatory structure or democratic culture, students resort to violence to vent their frustrations and disagreement

On training, it has been noted that secondary school principals in some African countries are ill-prepared to meet the demands posed by the changing nature of their jobs (Mukeen *et al.*, 2005 and 2007). Mukeen *et al.* argue that, where training for school principals exists it is often brief and focused on administrative tasks. They emphasise that organized and systematic training in effective and transparent educational leadership and management, which goes beyond the occasional workshop presently offered in most systems, is urgently needed for principals. They suggest that principals should be trained as instructional leaders, builders of learning communities and developers of strong democratic communities that encourage participation in schools. Similarly, DeJaeghere *et al.* (2009), in discussing the training needs of secondary school principals in Uganda, comment that while there is a need to

improve principals' competencies to manage the dynamically changing secondary schools in Uganda, policymakers are not clear on which skills are most needed and how to best provide effective training for those skills.

Literature also reveals that the mechanism of recruiting teachers to become principals in many sub-Saharan African countries is unsystematic and not necessarily based on professional criteria (Mulkeen *et al.*, 2005 & 2007; DeJaeghere *et al.*, 2009). "The position of principal is often not professionalized or seen as a career choice. It is sometimes filled by senior teachers who rotate through the position for a limited period of time" Mulkeen *et al.*, 2007: xi). The dominant tradition has been to recruit from within the teaching profession, often as a reward for good performance, long years of service or ideological compatibility with the existing political orientation of government (Mulkeen *et al.*, 2005). They point out that principals rarely have specific training for the new responsibilities they face, especially before taking up a post. The frequent use of seniority as the basis for promotion, in combination with lack of specific job training, often results in principals being a rather conservative group with little motivation to innovate or support new school or classroom practices. They also often use corporal punishment on students, which I discuss next.

The use of corporal punishment in schools

Corporal punishment refers to intentional application of physical pain as a way of changing behaviour and includes a variety of methods such as hitting, slapping, spanking, punching, kicking, pinching, shaking, shoving, and painful

body postures (Middleton 2008; Owen, 2005; Robinson *et al.*, 2005). It is the "use of physical force with the intention of causing a child to experience pain, but not injury, for the purpose of correction or control of the child's behaviour" (Straus & Donnelly, 2001:4). The most typical form of school corporal punishment is spanking by a member of the school authority because the person believes the student has disobeyed a rule (Owen, 2005). Robinson *et al.* (2005) contend that corporal punishment in schools does not refer to the occasional need for a school official to restrain a dangerous student or use physical force as a means of protecting members of the school community subjected to imminent danger.

Although corporal punishment in schools has been proscribed in Europe and many other Western countries as well as in Israel and Japan (Middleton 2008), it has received support for many years from interpretation of "legal and religious doctrines, including those beliefs based on Judeo-Christian and other religions" (Greydanus *et al.*, 2003:2). In Africa, governments have been banning corporal punishment in recent years, in some cases after signing international human rights treaties although it has neither stopped its use nor appreciation of it (Lacey, 2006).

Giving an example of Botswana, Harber (2002) observes that schools tend to be authoritarian and corporal punishment is widespread. However, as Pansiri (2008) points out in reference to 'Primary School Management Development Project in Botswana', a lot of changes seem to be taking place in schools in terms of interpersonal behaviour and cooperation, innovativeness and

creativity, learners' participation in school leadership, conflict management and delegation, which suggest a move towards democratic school leadership.

In South Africa, Soneson (2005a:18-19) argues that the Constitution of South Africa is one of the more progressive constitutions in the world. It protects people's civil and political rights as well as their social and economic rights and contains a specific section on children. In line with South Africa's international obligations, all forms of corporal punishment of children in school are banned. However, Soneson (2005a:11) points out that "corporal punishment and other forms of humiliating and degrading punishment are still widely used in schools". Soneson attributes this to a lack of understanding of the human rights framework protecting children as well as of the harmful effects of corporal punishment on children, among teachers and parents. Equally, the training on alternatives to corporal punishment has had little impact on a large number of teachers and they are not equipped to manage discipline in the classroom through non-violent means.

In Ethiopia, McIvor (2005b:17) observes that "the constitution clearly prohibits physical and humiliating punishment of children in schools and other institutions". However, it is unclear about measures or penalties to be taken against teachers and other school personnel who administer corporal punishment or emotional punishment in contravention of the regulation.

Similarly, in Zambia, Soneson (2005b:8) notes that the Zambian Constitution "recognises children's fundamental human rights to respect for dignity and physical integrity". However, despite being in contradiction of international

and Zambian law, corporal punishment and other forms of humiliating and degrading punishment against children are still socially accepted. The low status of children in society, and children's lack of power, have prevented a complete prohibition of corporal punishment in many countries around the world, including Zambia.

Angula and Lewis (1997) point out that the Namibian government also decided to abolish corporal punishment in 1992 although the ban was highly controversial. They argue that parents felt the government was undermining their authority while the teachers and principals felt that they had no sanctions for maintaining discipline.

In the context of my study, the literature on corporal punishment implies that in a number of countries in Africa, corporal punishment is still considered an element of school authority's way of maintaining good behaviour in school. This is against the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child and, equally, does not sit well with views on democratic school leadership. Therefore, in Kenya the successful elimination of the use of corporal punishment in schools would be viewed as an important step towards democratic school leadership.

The changing school leadership in Africa

Despite the authoritarian and centralised systems of education discussed above, Harber (2002) observes that there are changes taking place in some African countries that point to growing awareness of the need for democratic school leadership. He points out that some form of democracy is now widely seen as the goal of political development by many international agencies and

national governments throughout the world. Harber emphasises that there is evidence that a number of African countries such as Tanzania, South Africa and Namibia are now taking this wider understanding of education for democracy seriously. In these countries there have been concerns with curriculum reform, moving towards more learner-centred approaches to teaching and pupil involvement in some aspects of school decision-making.

In Tanzania, institutional arrangements in schools tend to support a participative leadership style although not of the kind witnessed in Western countries. Harber observes that, as part of a local version of democracy, school councils in Tanzanian schools comprise pupils, staff, parents and the principals. Their aim is to influence school policy, even though principals are largely authorised to have the final say. From his research in two schools in Tanzania which had active student council, Harber (1997:4) found that both staff and students felt that participation had helped them develop responsibility, confidence, and problem-solving skills through discussion in a friendly environment. In another study, conducted in Ethiopia and Eritrea, he explains that students stated that they preferred teachers who treated them with respect and discussed issues with them in a democratic and participatory manner.

In South Africa, Harber notes that there is a conscious and planned effort to use the education systems to promote democracy. Thus, although education cannot provide a quick fix solution to the problems of democratisation over time, it can slowly help to embed democratic politics in a more supportive and sustaining culture.

The trend towards democratic school leadership in South African schools is also discussed by Enslin (1999), Thurlow (2003) Coleman (2003) and Mncube (2009). Thurlow (2003:21) demonstrates that in South Africa, the Schools Act of 1996, enacted after the end of apartheid "places school management firmly on the road to a school-based system of education management". However, organisational autonomy and decentralisation alone do not guarantee school democracy (Mncube, 2009). Internally, the school itself must be organised along democratic lines by creating a structure that will allow all stakeholders to take part actively in the affairs of the school. This is a move towards a more democratic society which was part of the strategy to democratise school and other government institutions at the end of apartheid (Coleman, 2003). Coleman observes that the governing bodies of schools include representatives of the community comprising parents and learners from age 14 upwards. Mncube (2009) explains that this involvement of teachers, students and parents has enabled them to develop a sense of ownership of the school and as such take responsibility and accept accountability for what is happening at the school. The adoption of democratic school governance in South Africa means that, whatever decisions are made in a school should be formulated on the bases of consultation, collaboration, co-operation, partnership, mutual trust and participation of all affected parties in the school community.

Angula and Lewis (1997), in a discussion about the promotion of democratic processes in educational decision making in Namibia five years after independence, observe that the Namibian Educational Code of Conduct for

Schools, issued by the government in 1990, was the main basis for the development of school leadership at the time. The document discusses the democratic processes necessary in the administration of schools including the establishment of school boards with parent, teacher and student representation. It states that principals and school boards have the responsibility to initiate and support parent participation in school affairs and teachers have the responsibility to consult with students' parents (Angula and Lewis, 1997). Angula and Lewis also identify Student Representative Councils (SRC) as another formal school-level structure for democratic decision making. Since independence, SRCs have been viewed by the government as giving students experience with democratic structures and practices and therefore have been promoted at the secondary school level. It was directed in the *Code of Conduct* that student representatives to school boards should be elected to these councils.

From the foregoing literature on school leadership in Africa, it emerges that the development of democratic principles of school leadership varies from one country to another. Equally, in many African countries the school principals do not have adequate training for school leadership and therefore whatever methods they use emanate from their personal judgement, workshops, and in-service training. The recruitment of the school leaders is also not systematic and sometimes depends on political will. The principals face a number of challenges in school leadership including shortage of teachers, students' disturbances and external pressure from parents and education officials.

However, most of the literature on educational management and leadership in Africa gives little attention to the cultural context of the schools. The judgement of what entails 'good' school leadership is based on the Western orthodoxy of what it should be. For example, it is taken for granted that authoritarian school leadership is not appropriate for schools in Africa but these assumptions do not look at how the style of leadership fits within the cultural context and the level of awareness in the local communities (Walker and Dimmock, 2002). Through considering these assumptions my study seeks to establish the perception of students, teachers and principals of democratic school leadership and how the perceptions inform practices in their schools bearing in mind the cultural context of the schools.

Summary

In this chapter, I have reviewed literature with a specific focus on four broad areas. These are: Leadership and management; various conceptions of democracy and democratic school leadership with emphasis on a developmental conception of democratic practice; culture and school leadership, and the literature on school leadership in Africa. The literature highlights research and theoretical developments in democratic school leadership and how they informed my study.

From the review of the literature, some of the key issues which I later take up in my discussion in chapter seven are:

- Because of the changing demands on school management and administration, and the impact of leadership on school effectiveness

and improvement, many countries are moving from emphasising procedural management tasks and daily administration of schools to an emphasis on leadership which is more forward looking. This is done by putting in place policies that emphasise the training of school leaders to develop leadership skills so that school principals do not rely on trial and error as well as the little instruction they get during their teacher training.

- Concepts of democracy and democratic school leadership involve more than allowing people to vote and allowing students and teachers to give their views on school matters. They include issues such as social justice, ethics, participation in decisions, collaboration and respect for others.
- Cultural practices seem to influence the way teachers and school principals perceive their roles in schools and their practices in schools.
- In many African countries, education systems are centralised and most decisions are made by the central government with individual schools having little autonomy.
- Although in many African countries there is legislation banning corporal punishment, most schools still practise it.
- There is a sense of change taking place in the way schools are managed in many sub-Saharan Africa countries as they start to recognise the benefits that may accrue from involving parents, teachers, the community and students in school matters.

In the next chapter, I discuss how I addressed the methodological issues in my study.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

Introduction

In this chapter, I begin with a discussion of the philosophical paradigm which guided my study and the ethnographic case study approach that I adopted. I then explain the instruments of data collection that I used and how I analysed the data. Finally, I outline how I met the ethical requirements and the challenges I faced during my fieldwork.

Philosophical Paradigm

"Anyone who is not confused here doesn't understand what is going on" (in Litchman, 2006:3).

A paradigm constitutes a way of looking at the world and interpreting what is observed while a research philosophy indicates how research ought to be conducted, by whom, and with what degrees of involvement (Rubin and Rubin, 2005). A researcher's philosophical leaning is equivalent to the research paradigm, some parts of which may not be explicit but still influence the research process (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005). Klenke (2008) contends that it is not possible to conduct rigorous research without understanding its philosophical underpinnings. Thus, a good research inquiry makes the philosophical assumptions about paradigms and frameworks explicit in the writing of the study and the researcher is aware that they influence the conduct of inquiry (Creswell, 2007). Two main philosophical assumptions in research are ontology and epistemology, and the researcher's commitments

to them are critical in framing the research process (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005; Johnson 2008; Klenke, 2008).

Ontology is defined as the nature of reality or the assumptions we have about reality or knowledge, whilst epistemology refers to the way reality or knowledge is studied (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005; Johnson 2008; Mason, 2002). The ontological assumptions can be conceptualized along a continuum with two extremes; at one end is the 'objective' view of reality and at the other the 'subjective' (Johnson 2008). Richards (2003) refers to the two ontological paradigms as realism and relativism respectively. He explains that the realist perspective looks at the world as an objective entity that has rules and regulations that govern behaviour; thus the existence of 'objective truth'. The realist's role in research is to be neutral and their purpose is to discover the objective reality. The relativists on the other hand take a subjective position and hold that there is no single viewpoint of the world and therefore reality is internal to and dependent on the individual's perception and experience (Johnson 2008). It is not only that which is perceived, but that which is interpreted by the individual. Relativists argue that these individual interpretations are deeply embedded in a rich contextual web that cannot be readily generalised to other settings (Klenke, 2008). Consequently, there is no objective reality but multiple realities socially constructed by individuals from within their own contextual interpretation (Mason, 2002).

Mason (2002) argues that it is only once we recognise that alternative ontological perspectives might tell different stories that we can begin to see our own ontological view of the social world as a position which should be

established and understood, rather than as an obvious and universal truth which can be taken for granted. Using a story of a traffic accident, Johnson (2008) illustrates the relativist viewpoint that our position, history and social context influences how we view specific events:

> One defining feature of social life is that individuals interpret their experiences in the world differently. This is exemplified in the familiar story of three people who witness a traffic accident at an intersection. When interviewed separately, each offers slightly different accounts of what was seen. Several possible factors account for these differences. Whilst some are *independent of* the individual, others are *inherent to* the individual. Among these are the positions from which the crash was witnessed, the amount of time that elapsed between the accident and interview, the reliability of the witnesses' memories, the amount of sunlight present, and the health and quality of eyesight. These and other variables account for contrasting interpretations of the accident (Johnson, 2008:304).

Epistemology is "the nature of evidence and knowledge, the rules and principles by which we decide whether and how social phenomena can be known and how knowledge can be demonstrated" (Mason, 2002:16). Every researcher brings some set of epistemological assumptions into the research process (even if they are not aware of them) and these assumptions influence how they understand and interpret their data (Klenke, 2008).

The most common epistemological paradigms are positivism and constructivism (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005). There are others such as postpositivism and postmodernism. Denzin and Lincoln explain that the ontological positions of realism and relativism are consistent with epistemological viewpoints of positivism and constructivism respectively.

In this study I use the phrase 'interpretive-constructionist' (see Rubin and Rubin, 2005:20) because it acknowledges that the researcher and the participants do not only co-construct the reality but also interpret the reality in

their specific ways. That is, the knowledge created thus represents the *constructed interpretations* (my italics) of the individual knower which are filtered through the interests associated with his/her social and cultural location (Johnson, 2008). Equally, although I am using the concepts 'constructivism' and 'contructionism' interchangeably, I am aware that Crotty (1998:58) suggests that we "reserve the term *constructivism* for epistemological considerations focusing exclusively on 'the meaning-making activity of the individual mind' and to use *constructionism* where the focus includes 'the collective generation [and transmission] of meaning" (author's emphasis).

I have adopted an interpretive-constructionist epistemology because, it is also rooted in subjectivism and assumes that knowledge can only be created and understood from the point of view of the individual. That is, knowledge is relative to the knower and rests on interpretations made by him/her hence the label, interpretive (Johnson, 2008; Rubin and Rubin, 2005).

Therefore, I am working within a relativist ontological and an interpretive-constructionist's epistemological paradigm. I take the view that the way students, teachers and principals perceive democratic school leadership may differ, not only between the students and teachers but also among the students and the teachers. The same applies to their interpretations of the practices within their schools. I also adopt the view that it is by interacting and talking to the participants, listening to their views and interpretations that I can gain an understanding of the variations in their perspectives of the practices in the schools.

Whilst adopting the interpretive-constructionist stance, I take into account the fact that, though each person may interpret the practices and activities in schools in a somewhat distinct manner, s/he is likely, at the same time, to be influenced by the views of peers, family, or an ethnic group to which s/he belongs. It is also reasonable to draw on the actual words of the participants to provide evidence of the different perspectives and views on the practices in their schools.

Another important factor about the interpretive-constructionist stance that is important for my study is that researchers often address the "process" of interaction among individuals (Creswell, 2007; Hammersley and Atkinson 2007; Mason, 2002). Equally, as Rubin and Rubin (2005) maintain, understanding the interpretive-constructionist approach enables a researcher to adapt to unexpected problems and work out new solutions that make possible the collection of data to continue. This is because the researcher does not follow strict procedures of data collection and can adjust as the situation demands. For example, in my study, in Case One School I conducted focus group discussions with between 12-16 students instead of six to eight suggested in the literature (see Casey and Krueger, 2000). This is because I needed students from every class in the same year and in each I got between three to four volunteers and I felt that I could not send them away.

My study also has elements of postmodernist thinking, which is defined by the claim that there is no objective, universal reality and absolute truth; only

competing interpretations based on people's experiences (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005). Inherent in this claim are several points of convergence with interpretive-constructivism. For example, Johnson (2008) observes that much like the interpretive-constructionist perspective, postmodernists view reality as subjective and particular and dependent on the interpretations of the individual. They also reject the assumption that reality is defined by objective universal truths that not only await discovery but remain true in spite of the meanings humans impose on them (Johnson 2008).

However, Johnson points out that postmodernism is distinct from interpretive-constructionism in two ways. First, whereas interpretive-constructionism emphasises the need to move toward consensual truth in order to create social stability, postmodernism does not. Secondly, it also differs in the emphasis it gives to power and the role power plays as multiple interpretations of reality compete for dominance. For example, in my study the element of postmodernist thinking is based on the view that within the schools, the perceptions and interpretations of practices may reflect the power balance in the school. Thus principals and teachers, who hold the powerful and privileged positions in the schools, could have their interpretations and perspectives of the policies and practices dominate the operations of the schools at the expense of the students' perspectives. Therefore, as Johnson (2008:311) observes, "those interpretations that are enacted and personified in the structure, culture and policies of the organisation represent the interests of the powerful and privileged and provide the means through which competing interpretations are silenced".

Nevertheless, my intention in this study is not to expose, as the postmodernist would, the dominant interpretations of the organization that "perpetuate the interests of the powerful and the marginalization of the less powerful in order to destabilize the distribution of power that defines the collective" (Johnson, 2008:310). Mine is to highlight the different perceptions of democratic school leadership and how they inform the practices in the schools and what this means for the Kenyan Government's requirement for democratic practices in schools.

The interpretive-constructionist epistemology I have adopted is different from the positivist epistemology because the latter presupposes that knowledge is politically and socially neutral and is achieved by following a rigid plan for gathering information (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005; Mason, 2002). Denzin and Lincoln (2005) observe that according to positivists the objects and events that researchers study exist independently of people's perceptions and hence there can be only one version that is true. Positivists therefore assume that "there is an objective reality that researchers should try to uncover as they conduct their research" (Litchman, 2006:3). Positivists suggest that we should look for observable facts and apply methods of the natural sciences to the social sciences. Thus, as Hammersley and Atkinson (2007/1995) argue, positivists oppose the fundamentals of constructivists' research that there may be several different constructions of events by participants, each of which is true in some sense. They maintain that the data are generated using methods that are regarded as neutral and do not have any interference from the researcher. However, Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004) note that some

positivists acknowledge the possibility of different understandings of common reality that cause actions to be undertaken in a particular way.

Closely linked to positivism is postpositivism which developed from the former because it became evident that in social science capturing a reality that was "out there" was difficult, if not impossible, to achieve (Litchman, 2006:3). As a consequence, postpositivist ideas hold the view that researchers should strive to capture reality by using multiple methods. In such ways reality would be approximated. "Whilst the positivist position is that there is reality out there to be studied, captured and understood, the postpositivist position is that reality can never be fully apprehended only approximated" (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005:11). Denzin and Lincoln observe that postpositivism therefore relies on multiple methods as a way of capturing as much of reality as possible, but it also emphasises the discovery and verification of theories. "Postpositivists use modified experimental, falsification of hypothesis and may include qualitative methods whilst positivists use experimental verification of hypothesis and chiefly quantitative methods in their methodology" (Guba and Lincoln, 2005:193), which was not the case in my study

By using a relativist ontology and an interpretive-constructionist epistemology, I also recognise that as a researcher my own background in the research (cultural and historical experiences) shapes my interpretations and the whole research process. Thus I needed to be aware that my assumptions influenced what I asked and how I construed the participants' responses. With the foregoing in mind, I adopted a qualitative method in my research.

Qualitative Method

Interpretive-constructionist-qualitative inquiry is distinguished by its emphasis on a holistic treatment of phenomena (Stake, 1995). It sees the world as interconnected and is context-sensitive. Silverman (2005) argues that qualitative inquiry tends to work with a small number of cases which means sacrificing scope for detail. However, what amounts to 'small number of cases' and 'detail' is relative.

As in my study, qualitative research involves in-depth interviews and/or observations of humans in natural and social settings (Litchman, 2006) and seeks answers to questions that stress *how* social experience is created and given meaning (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005). This requires being in close proximity with the participants in their social context. Consequently, Hammersley *et al.* (2001:53) observe that if researchers are to understand people's outlooks and experiences then they must:

> be close to groups, live with them, look at the world from their viewpoints, see them in various situations and in various moods, appreciate the inconsistencies, ambiguities and contradictions in their behaviour, explore the nature and extent of their interests, understand their relationship among themselves and other groups. In short, the researchers should, if possible, adopt the roles of the people being studied.

Qualitative research also suited my study because the ultimate aim in qualitative research is to generate ideas or concepts that offer to cast new light on the issues being investigated (Hammersley *et al.*, 2001), in this instance, the perceptions of democratic school leadership by teachers and students. Therefore, my data collection and analysis was fluid and flexible, data driven and context-sensitive (Mason, 2002).

Qualitative research is different from a quantitative study because the latter adopts tests, surveys and experiments in data collection. In quantitative research, objectivity is judged by researchers on the basis of scientific methods which are modelled on the natural sciences. They generally use procedures that are mostly concerned with the testing of theories (Hammersley and Atkinson 1995). Hammersley and Atkinson explain that quantitative research often involve tests that require control of some variables which is achieved through physical manipulations, as in experiments, or through statistical analysis of a large number of cases, as in survey technique.

Whilst adopting the qualitative method, I took note that qualitative and quantitative methods should not be viewed as direct opposites. "Instead they represent different ends of a continuum, thus a study tends to be more qualitative than quantitative and vice versa" (Creswell, 2009: 3). Equally, differences in epistemological beliefs should not prevent a qualitative researcher from utilizing data collection techniques more typically associated with quantitative research, and vice versa (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004).

At the same time, qualitative research differs from mixed methods because the latter is where qualitative methods are often employed in combination with quantitative ones including the use of randomized experimental design (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005; Teddlie and Tashakkori, 2003). Denzin and Lincoln argue that those who use mixed methods presume a methodological hierarchy in which quantitative methods are at the top and qualitative are

relegated to a largely auxiliary role. They add that the mixed methods movement takes qualitative methods out of their natural home which is within the critical, interpretive framework.

One of the approaches commonly used in qualitative research is ethnography (Creswell, 2007; Litchman, 2006). In this study, I adopted an ethnographic case study approach which I discuss next.

Why ethnography?

Creswell (2007:68) defines ethnography as:

> a qualitative design in which the researcher describes and interprets the shared and learned patterns of values, behaviours, beliefs and language of a culture-sharing group - as both a process and an outcome of research. As a process, it involves extended observations of the group, most often through participant observation, in which the researcher is immersed in the day-to-day lives of the people and observes and interviews the group participants.

Hammersley and Atkinson (2007:3) advance the same view on ethnography as one of the many approaches of qualitative research which usually:

> involves the researcher participating overtly or covertly in people's daily lives for an extended period of time, watching what happens, listening to what is said, and/or asking questions through informal and formal interviews, collecting documents and artefacts – in fact, gathering whatever data are available to throw light on the issues that are emerging focus of inquiry.

An ethnographic approach was suitable for my study because it is grounded in commitment to first hand experience and exploration of a particular social setting on the basis of (though not exclusively by) participant observation (Mason, 2002). As in my study, Mason adds that in ethnographic studies researchers see people and their interpretations, perceptions, meanings and understandings as the primary data sources. The analysis of data involves

interpretation of the meanings, functions, and consequences of human actions and institutional practices, and how these are implicated in local and wider context (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007; Pole and Morrison, 2003).

Ethnographers stress that "we move within social worlds, and that to understand the behaviour, values and meanings of any given individual (or group), we must take account of their cultural context" (Walford, 2008a:7). In this respect, ethnography balances attention on the sometimes minute everyday detail of individual lives with wider social structures. Hence, it was necessary for me to be open to learn from the students and teachers and be willing to see everything and suspend preconceptions and judgements on what should be selected as data.

Jeffrey and Troman (2004) and Hammersley (2006) observe that current ethnographic studies, especially in educational institutions, tend to move from the older anthropological model of ethnographic fieldwork where a researcher would be in the field for years, to its more recent forms in which we study only parts of people's lives over relatively short periods. In this study, I stayed in each of the two Case Schools for six weeks. I adopted a "compressed time mode ethnography"(Jeffrey and Troman, 2004: 538) or "compressed ethnography" (Walford, 2005: 91) which involves a short period of intense ethnographic research in which researchers inhabit a research site almost permanently for anything from a few days to a month or a few months. This type of ethnography captures the dynamics of a context, documenting the visible and less tangible social structures and relations (Jeffrey and Troman, 2004). As was the case during my fieldwork, Jeffrey and Troman note that

observational field notes are a central part of the data as opportunities for conversations with inhabitants are often restricted because they are fully engaged with daily routines.

Whilst in the schools, I sought access to places such as classrooms to observe lessons, staffrooms, meetings, playgrounds, assemblies, dining halls, church services and social gatherings in the schools, for example parents visiting days. I used the idea of 'hanging around' (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995/2007) from Monday to Friday in the school staffrooms and chatting with the teachers. In this way I was able to experience and note every detail of the schools and activities which were of relevance to my study (Jeffrey and Troman, 2004). As Walford (2008b) asserts, the success of an ethnographer depends on the researcher developing and maintaining a positive personal involvement with the participants and staying as close as possible to what is being studied. As explained earlier, I did the same in my study.

Why Case Study?

Stake (1995:1) defines a case as "a specific bounded system" where it is possible to identify that some features are within the case whilst others are outside but are significant as context. Case study thus refers to an empirical enquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon or object within its real-life context (Yin, 2003). But Yin warns that case study should not be confused with qualitative research and points out that case study can be based on any mix of quantitative and qualitative evidence. Stake (2005) supports Yin's view, arguing that case study is defined by interest in individual

cases, not by methods of inquiry and a researcher can collect detailed information using a variety of data collection procedures.

Case study typically involves an in-depth observation of an individual unit such as a student, a family, a school, an entire culture and is used to gain in-depth understanding of it, focussing on the process rather than outcome (Burns, 2000; Creswell, 2009; Gerring, 2007; Litchman, 2006; Silverman, 2005). Silverman (2005:126) argues that "the basic idea is that one case (or perhaps a small number of cases) is studied in detail, using whatever methods seem appropriate". He adds that whilst researchers may have a variety of purposes for their study as well as research questions, the general objective is to develop as full an understanding of that case as possible. It is therefore ideally suited to the needs and resources of a small scale researcher (Blaxter, Hughes and Tight, 2001).

In my study, I focused on two Case Schools and my primary purpose was to probe deeply and to analyse intensively how the students, teachers and principals perceive democratic school leadership and also observe if their practices in the schools are reflected in the perceptions. Thus, as VanWynsberghe and Khan (2007) observe, I focused on meaningful social action and an in-depth understanding of how meaning is created in everyday life within the case. Therefore, the focus of a case study like mine is based on the understanding that no final construct of knowledge reigns within the cases because what is known is continuously modified as more information is gathered from different participants.

A case study can be classified as intrinsic if the study is undertaken primarily because one wants a better understanding of a specific case - "in all its particularity and ordinariness, this case is of interest" (Stake, 2005:445). It can also be multiple or collective if a number of cases are studied jointly in order to investigate a phenomenon, and can also be instrumental if a particular case is examined mainly to provide insight into an issue (Bassey, 1999; Stake 2005; Yin, 2003). Stake explains that in instrumental case study the case is of secondary interest and plays a supportive role and facilitates our understanding of something else. The case is still looked at in-depth, its context scrutinised and its ordinary activities detailed, although in this situation, the data so generated is used to inform the primary interest. He argues further that the case may be seen as typical of the other cases or not, but the choice is made to advance understanding of something else. Stake, however, warns that there is no hard–and–fast line distinguishing intrinsic case study from instrumental; it depends on the purpose of the study.

I adopted both multiple/collective and instrumental case study approaches. My study was multiple in the sense that I conducted it in two schools. It was instrumental because as much as I studied each case in detail, the cases helped highlight the students', teachers' and principals' perceptions of democratic school leadership and their practices in the schools. Thus, they (Case Schools) played a supportive role and facilitated my understanding of something else (Stake, 2005). However, I still looked at the Case Schools in depth and scrutinised their contexts in detail as discussed in Chapters four and five. As a multiple case study I sought out the perceptions and practices

that were common to both Case Schools as well those that were unique to each case school.

Case study has been criticised on the grounds that it provides little basis for scientific generalisation. However, as Yin (2003) argues, a case study, like an experiment, is generalisable to theoretical propositions and not to populations or universes. Yin adds that in this sense the case study, unlike the experiment, does not represent a 'sample' as happens in quantitative research but is intended to expand and generalise theories. Walford (2008b) advances similar argument that an extrapolation can be made between a particular case and a wider population only if there is a strong theoretical or logical connection between them. Bassey (1999) also argues that case study research can lead to "fuzzy generalizations". These are general statements with built–in uncertainty. It reports that "something has happened in one place and that it may also happen elsewhere" (Bassey, 1999: 52) if sufficient characteristics of the first are present in the other. Bassey adds that in the use of the adjective "fuzzy", the likelihood of there being exceptions is clearly recognised and this seems an appropriate concept for research in areas like education where human complexity is paramount.

Most importantly for my study, is Flyvbjerg's (2006:227) emphasis that "formal generalization is only one of many ways by which people gain and accumulate knowledge". He suggests that the idea that "knowledge cannot be formally generalized does not mean that it cannot enter into the collective process of knowledge accumulation in a given field or in a society" (ibid).

Thus purely descriptive case study without any attempt to generalise can certainly be of value in this process.

In this study I selected the Case Schools, not with the intention of generalising to the other schools in Kenya, but to understand how students, teachers and principals in the Case Schools perceive democratic school leadership and relate their perceptions to the practices in the schools. However, there is the possibility of similar perceptions and practices existing in other similar schools in Kenya.

Trustworthiness of my study

Bassey (1999) defines trustworthiness as ensuring that the research process is truthful, careful and rigorous enough to qualify to make the claims that it does. Traditionally, the terms internal validity, external validity, reliability and objectivity have been used to demonstrate the trustworthiness of a research project. However, some qualitative researchers (e.g. Creswell and Miller, 2000; Denzin and Lincoln, 2005; Mason, 2002) advocate the use of different terms such as credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability in their place, along with triangulation. The argument for the different terminologies is that, in qualitative research, as well as in interpretive-constructionist paradigm, the way to judge trustworthiness is rather different from quantitative inquiry (and positivist paradigm) where the former terms are predominantly used. The concepts of reliability and validity are vital concepts in surveys and experiments but not in qualitative case study research which is concerned with particularities of a phenomenon that is not chosen because it

is typical (Bassey, 1999; Mason, 2002). Based on the foregoing, I have outlined how I ensured that my study was trustworthy.

Credibility

Referred to as internal validity in quantitative research, credibility is defined as the extent to which the study actually investigates what it claims to investigate and reports what occurred in the field (Creswell and Miller, 2000; Mason, 2002; Yin 2003). It is the extent to which a research fact or finding is what it is claimed to be (Bassey, 1999). Credibility can be achieved by the researcher demonstrating that s/he indeed carried out the research or what Eisenhart (2006:573) refers to as "having been there". This, according to Maxwell (2005), can be done by giving a detailed account or description of the research process. Eisenhart (2006) suggests further that the use of concepts from the literature, excerpts from field notes and quotes from interviews can increase credibility of a study. Thus, credibility in this sense can also be assured by establishing 'a chain of evidence' (Yin, 2003). Guba & Lincoln (2005) list fairness and reflexivity as among ways of answering the questions on credibility. By fairness, they mean that "all stakeholder views, perspectives, claims, concerns and voices should be apparent in the text" (Guba &Lincoln, 2005: 207) and by reflexivity, they mean "the process of reflecting critically on the self as a researcher" (Ibid, 2005: 210).

Based on these suggestions, I addressed the questions of credibility in a number of ways. First, my peers and supervisors (experienced researchers) were involved in reviewing and commenting on my guidelines for the interview

questions, focus group discussions and my observation strategies to help establish that they were appropriate. I also designed the study to elicit a chain of evidence through observations, focus group discussions, interviews and informal conversations so as to corroborate information gathered from the participants. In the interviews, I used probes and follow-up questions to clarify information given by the interviewees. I also used multiple cases to enhance the credibility of the data gathered so that conclusions are not simply made on the basis of one case. However, as I have already stated, I did not set out to generalise my findings to any larger population.

Transferability

Yin (2003) defines this as establishing the domain to which a study's findings can be generalised (external validity in quantitative research). He suggests that transferability can be ensured in research by use of replication logic in multiple case studies. According to Mason (2002), transferability is the extent to which we can make some form of wider claim on the basis of our research. However, the issue of transferability in case study research appears to be problematic. There are divergent views as to what sort of generalisations can be claimed from case study research. Views have been expressed that there is no room for generalisations from case studies (Richards, 2003). Richards (2003:10) states that "it might be said that the power of qualitative research derives from its ability to represent the particular and that this distinguishes it from those sorts of research which depend on generalisability".

Nonetheless, as discussed in the section on case study, Stake (1995), Bassey (1999) and Yin (2003) raise the possibility of naturalistic, fuzzy and analytic generalisations, respectively. Naturalistic generalisations are "conclusions arrived at through personal engagement in life's affairs or by vicarious experience so well constructed that the person feels as if it happened to themselves" (Stake, 1995:85). These are the kinds of generalisations that people make because they are interested in the case and compare it to other cases with which they are familiar. Stake adds that people also form generalisations from their experiences. However, he cautions that damage occurs when commitment to generalise runs so strong that the researcher's attention is drawn away from features important in understanding the case itself. Consequently, a qualitative researcher is interested in obtaining data from the cases studied from which, after analysis and discussion, the researcher and the readers may add to our understanding of the phenomenon under study. Thus generalisability is inferred rather than proposed.

Analytic generalisation is where a study leads to the development of an appropriate theory which then facilitates data collection in a subsequent case study (Yin, 2003). Yin contends that analytic generalisation is normally contrasted with statistical generalisation.

In this study, my ultimate position on the issue of transferability is influenced by Bassey's (1999) 'fuzzy generalisation'. Therefore, it is possible that the specific perceptions of democratic school leadership in these Case Schools

might be found in other schools within the same contexts in Kenya with similar characteristics.

Dependability

Yin (2003) suggests that the way to ensure dependability is to make clear and detailed descriptions of the steps followed in the case study. He observes that the general way of approaching the dependability problem is "to make as many steps operational as possible and to conduct research as if someone were always looking over our shoulder" (Yin, 2003:38).

Dependability can be equated to reliability in quantitative research. In qualitative research such as mine, care has to be taken to make a *thick description*, (Geertz, 1973) of the entire research process, and to clarify the constructs in such detail that such a study could be done again. Stake (1995) also identifies what he refers to as 'a substantial body of description' as a way of ensuring dependability in case study research.

In this study, I have used 'components of thick description' (Cohen *et al.*, 2007; Ponterotto, 2006) which involve recording interviews, non verbal communication, participants' informal comments and detailed description of the Case Schools and interview contexts. I have also made efforts to ensure that the research process, findings, interpretations and conclusions are consistent. I, however, note that in qualitative research there is no guarantee that the results would be the same if someone repeated the study considering the nuances and context related issues involved.

Confirmability

Confirmability is often referred to as objectivity in quantitative research. In qualitative research questions have been raised about how 'objective' a researcher can be. These questions also involve how neutral the researcher is and to what extent s/he influences the findings. Hammersley and Atkinson (1995) argue that though researchers might have an influence on what they study, this does not rule out the trustworthiness of the findings. Consequently, the researcher needs to acknowledge his or her role in the research process and admit any possible influences.

According to Gillham (2000), it is normal for researchers to carry their prior conceptualisations and prejudices of/on issues into the fieldwork, based on our education and experiences. He suggests that the researcher should be conscious of this from the onset, acknowledge the conceptualisations and prejudices and try to maintain an 'open mind'. Hammersley and Atkinson (1995:18) share Gillham's position, asserting that rather than "engaging in futile attempts to eliminate the effects of the researcher completely, we should set about understanding them", thus being reflexive in the study.

Reflexivity is usually associated with a critical reflection on the process of research and the role of the researcher (Litchman, 2006). It is, however, not confined to confirmability alone but runs through the entire process of qualitative research. It concerns the impact of the researcher on the system and the system on the researcher. That is, it acknowledges the role of the self in qualitative research. The researcher is able to sort through biases and

think about how they affect various aspects of the research, especially interpretation of meanings. Hammersley and Atkinson (2007) confirm that the concept of reflexivity acknowledges that the orientations of the researcher will be shaped by their socio-historical locations, including the values and interests that these confer upon them. They add that it represents a rejection of the idea that social research is, or can be, carried out in some autonomous realm that is insulated from the wider society and from the biography of the researcher, in such a way that its findings can be unaffected by social processes and personal characteristics.

With this mind, I attempted to be reflexive in my interviews, focus group discussions and observations bearing in mind that my presence in the schools was likely to affect the behaviour of the teachers and the students. I therefore made my position clear with regard to my research. I also made it clear that I work at a university and that I had been a high school teacher for five years before joining the university. Equally, I was aware that I have my own perceptions of democratic school leadership in Kenya. Inevitably, there are biases I may hold even in the subconscious, which may creep in unnoticed during my study. Suffice to say though, that I sought to approach the study with an 'open mind', making an effort to keep my biases out of the investigation and willing to learn from the field.

Triangulation

Triangulation is the application of multiple perspectives in collecting data (Stake, 2005). Stake adds that in qualitative research the researcher is interested in diversity of perceptions and the multiple realities within which people live and, triangulation helps to identify these different realities. Hammersley *et al.* (2001) also hold the view that the major means of validating accounts and observations in qualitative work is through triangulation, adding that the use of several methods to explore an issue greatly increases the chances of accuracy. Yin (2003:97-101) identifies different types of triangulation as:

- Methodological triangulation (applying more than one methodological paradigm in a specific study),
- Investigator triangulation (more than one investigator involved in a specific study),
- Theory triangulation (using more than one theory in one study).
- Triangulation of data generation instruments (using more than one instrument e.g. interviews and observation to generate data).
- Source triangulation (getting data from different participants but aimed at corroborating the same fact or phenomenon).

In this study, I employed both triangulation of data generation instruments (interviews, focus group discussions, observation and informal conversations) and source triangulation (getting data from the students, teachers and principals) aimed at corroborating the same phenomena; perceptions of democratic school leadership and practices in the Case Schools. Thus,

triangulation helped cross-check participants' accounts to reveal diversity and contrasts. It is important to mention that triangulation also strengthened the credibility and transferability of my study.

Before I discuss the details of the instruments I used in my data collection, I present a brief explanation of the pilot study which I conducted three months before the main study.

Pilot Study

Before doing my main study, I conducted a pilot study which provided me with the opportunity to understand some of the participants' perspectives before starting the main research. It is an important aspect of any study because, as Blaxter *et al.* (2001:137) point out:

> You may think that you know well enough what you are doing, but the value of pilot research cannot be overestimated...things never work quite the way researchers envisage, even if the researchers have done them many times before, and they have a nasty habit of turning out very differently from how you expected on occasion...if you do not conduct a pilot study then, you will probably find that your initial period of data collection turns into a pilot study in any case.

I conducted my pilot study in one secondary school in Kenya for a period of two months. I did this to test my data collection instruments: interviews, observation and focus group discussions as well as to refine my research questions and the practical field procedures.

Practical preparations

The preparation for the pilot study involved seeking access to a school. Although I wanted to conduct the study in one school, it was necessary that I seek access to more than one so that if I did not get access to one then I would have an option. I identified two schools that were within the town where I work. I wrote and took letters personally to the principals and explained more details about my study. In the first school I visited, the Principal denied me access because, he stated, he had received many trainee teachers from the universities on teaching practice who would be regularly visited by assessors and therefore he did not want any more 'strangers' in the school.

I was granted access to the second school - a day school located in an urban centre with about 350 students and 22 teachers. The number of boys was almost twice that of the girls, most of them aged between 14 and 19 years.

The Principal introduced me to the head of department (HoD) of sciences to assist me meet the other teachers and facilitate my operations in the school. She took me to the staffroom and introduced me to the rest of the teachers and explained to them about my study. I used the 'hanging around' approach (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995) to create more rapport with the individual teachers and make arrangements for the interviews and focus group discussions. I agreed with the Principal that I would be attending school assemblies held every Monday and Friday in the morning.

The HoD arranged for me a meeting with a group of students from Form Three (about 16 years). In identifying the students she went to Form Three classes and announced that she wanted students who would volunteer to be involved in a discussion with me. She announced that she wanted both boys and girls. I later met 14 students in one group. Although I wanted to meet the Form Four students as well, I was not able to because they were doing exams which were scheduled during the afternoons including games time (4pm-5pm). When I met the Form Three students, I explained to them about the focus group discussion and agreed to meet another day. I held the discussion with the students in a free room attached to the school laboratory. I audio-recorded the focus group discussion with the consent of the students.

I conducted five interviews; four teachers and the Principal. Of the four teachers, three were heads of department (HoDs) whilst one was not. Initially, I had intended to interview two HoDs but one more offered to be interviewed and I felt I could not turn her down. Each interview lasted about one hour. I interviewed the Principal last and was able to seek clarification about some practices that I had observed, for example the use of corporal punishment on students. Unlike the interviews with the teachers which lasted for one hour, the interview with the Principal lasted for about 45 minutes.

Apart from the interviews and focus group discussions, I also observed the school assemblies, some lessons, games and drama rehearsals. Because I spent most of the time in the staffroom, I also observed how the teachers interacted with one another and with the students who came to the staffroom from time to time. I recorded the observed activities in my research journal.

As discussed in more detail later in this chapter, I used a thematic analysis approach in categorising the data collected through interviews, focus group discussions and observations and made changes for the main research based on the lessons learnt from the pilot study.

Lessons leant form the pilot study

From the pilot study I learnt four important lessons which influenced some of the changes I made in the main study. These were:

First, in my original design, 'informal conversations' was not part of the techniques of data collection. During the pilot study, I realised that I was able to gather lots of data from the informal conversations, remarks and comments made by the teachers. For example, at one time the head the department of Humanities remarked that she did not want to sit in the staffroom because most teachers who sit in the staffroom spent much time discussing 'petty' issues such as the type of clothes one wears. This comment reinforced what I had been told in the formal interviews, that there were groupings among the teachers in the school based on perceived economic status, and this affected how teachers related to one another. In my main study, I included informal conversations as a method of data collection.

Second, before the pilot study, I had planned to do general observations of activities, interactions and events in the schools and pick out what I considered relevant to my study. In the pilot study, I learnt that there were

lots of activities that went on in the school and therefore it was important to select some specific events that I wanted to observe. I picked school assemblies, lessons, meetings and prayer sessions because these activities provided students with opportunities to participate in formal school activities. I also learnt that I needed to observe the teachers I had already interviewed to see whether their answers to my questions were reflected in what they did in the classes (for example, involving students in class activities).

Third, my research questions in the original proposal included a question on how culture influences leadership in the schools. After analysing the pilot study data, I found out that including this as a research question produced a massive amount of data that qualified it to be another study of its own. Therefore, although my study still has elements of culture, it ceased to be one of my research questions. It emerges from the data as an element needing attention.

Lastly, I also learnt that whilst in the schools, it was not easy to be involved in selecting students to be included in the focus group discussions, especially in the early stages of the study. The teachers on duty wanted to pick the students for me. In the main study, I needed to stay in the schools for a few weeks and get familiar and develop some level of trust with the teachers before they allowed me to go with them to classes to seek out students who would volunteer to be included in the discussions.

Data collection, main study

Access

Within ethnography, access is a continuous process and after those with power within a school have been persuaded to give access, the researcher has to continually negotiate further access to observe classrooms and to interview teachers and students (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007; Walford 2008b). Walford (2008b) points out that access is seen as a process of building relationships with people, such that teachers and students learn to trust the researcher to the point where they are prepared to allow the ethnographer to observe them with few restrictions and be open about their beliefs. Access is thus never total, but might be seen as incremental continuum, where the researcher is gradually able to move from the initial permission to enter the buildings to a series of developed and trusting relationships with some teachers and students.

In this study, I sought access in different phases. Phase One arose out of the need to develop a rationale for selecting the two schools that I used as Case Schools - one where the principal perceived his/her leadership practices as democratic and another where the principal perceived his/her leadership practices as less democratic. This rationale is consistent with Walford's (2008b) suggestion that in an ethnographic case study the choice of the school should appear as closely as possible to the theoretical objectives of the study. Walford maintains that a researcher should select sites that are intrinsically significant and interesting in themselves and for themselves. Gerring (2007) adds to this argument that at the very least, the process of case selection needs a consideration of the cross-case characteristics of a

group of potential cases. He suggests that cases chosen for the study should be "identified by their status (extreme, deviant and so forth) relative to an assumed population of cases" (Gerring, 2007:13). And Flyvbjerg (2006) also emphasises that if we select a case on the basis of taken-for granted intuitive procedures, we are often called on to account for the selection. He maintains that the account must be sensible to other members of the scholarly communities of which we are part.

In the first phase, I planned to interview 10 school principals because I wanted to capture as divergent views as possible on their perceptions of democratic school leadership before selecting the two Case Schools. I wrote letters to 15 school principals seeking to interview them. In the letter, I explained the nature of my study and the kind of questions I had, indicating that the interviews would last between 45 minutes to one hour. I mentioned that the interviews would remain confidential and anonymity of the principals and schools would be guaranteed. I also explained that it was the first phase of my data collection and I might need further access to collect more data the following school term. As seen in Appendices five and six, I attached a letter of research approval and research permit from the Open University and Ministry of Education, Kenya, respectively.

I took the letter personally to each school and, in some instances where I found the principal in the school and they agreed to meet me, I discussed my study with them in more detail. Whilst some principals readily agreed to participate, others took longer to decide. Finally, I ended up with the 12 participants whom I interviewed. I used purposive sampling in identifying the

schools. I considered the location because some schools are not easily accessible especially when it rained. I also wanted to maintain a balance between the type of school (boarding/day; mixed/girls/boys; national/provincial/district) and the experience of the principals. Equally, I wanted the schools in the sample to be in the same geographical area to make my movement from one school to another easier.

After analysing the data and deciding on the two Case Schools, I negotiated further access with the teachers I interviewed and students in the focus group discussions (discussed in detail in Chapters five and six).

Ethnographic interviewing

This involves conducting an interview;

> with an ethnographic sensibility that aims at revealing the cultural context of individual lives through an engaged exploration of the beliefs, the values, the material conditions and structural forces underpinning the socially patterned behaviour of any individual (Forsay, 2008:58).

Forsay contends that in order to be worthy of the additional title of ethnographic, interviews must be conducted within the context of the broader sorts of participant-observer studies. Stake (1995) argues that in this type of interview, the qualitative researcher's concern is not simply getting "yes/no" answers but descriptions of the episode and explanations. The researcher asks follow-up questions and probes. Similarly, Hammersley (2006:9) suggests that in ethnographic studies interviews should serve as:

- a source of witness accounts about settings and events in the social world that the ethnographer may or may not have been able to observe her or himself; and
- supplying evidence about informants' general perspectives or attitudes: inferences being made about these from what people say and do in the interview situation.

Interviews can be a face-to-face verbal exchange between two people, face-to-face with a group of people, as well as a one to one by telephone. A distinction can also be made based on the degree of latitude given the interviewees; structured or fixed-response interviews, semi-structured interviews and open-ended interviews (Fontana and Frey, 2005; Freebody, 2003; Rubin and Rubin, 2005).

Structured interviews restrict the domains of relevance of talk to a pre-determined set of questions, and thus, by inference, a set of possible answers. Any materials outside of that domain of relevance are not sought, not recorded and/ or not taken into account in the analysis of the data (Freebody, 2003). Semi-structured interviews begin with a pre-determined set of questions, but allow some latitude in the breadth of relevance (Rubin and Rubin, 2005). To some extent what is taken to be relevant to the interviewee is pursued with follow-up questions. The interviewer may also find that the issues guiding the research in the first place need to be re-tuned or even changed comprehensively in the light of the statements of the interviewees (Freebody, 2003). Open-ended interviews are further along the continuum, in which perhaps only a few highly general questions or issues

are put to the interviewee who is free to answer and direct the talk (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995/2007).

I used a semi-structured interview for the teachers and principals because it has something of both structured and open-ended interviews. That is, establishing core issues to be covered but at the same time leaving the sequence and the relevance of the interviewees free to vary around (Freebody, 2003). I developed an interview guide which helped direct the interview so that the content focused on my specific research questions. Apart from the questions in the interview guide, I asked follow-up questions based on the particular concepts and ideas introduced by the teachers and principals that gave more insight into the meanings and perspectives that they attached to their perceptions of democratic school leadership and practices. My follow-up questions were specific to the comments that the interviewees made. I also used probes to keep the interviewee talking on the matter at hand to complete an idea, fill in the missing piece or request clarification of what was said and ask for examples. Both probes and follow-up questions helped me get "depth, detail, vividness, richness, and nuance" (Rubin and Rubin, 2005:129).

As seen in Appendices two and three the questions for principals and teachers focussed on four broad areas. These were:

- Their qualifications, training and experience.
- Their perception of democratic school leadership, whether it is practised in their schools and why they think so.

- Students' involvement in decision-making in the schools and how this happens or why it does not happen.
- Teachers' involvement in decision-making and other leadership operations in the schools.

The details of the number of teachers I interviewed in each Case school and how they were selected is discussed in Chapters five and six for Case One School and Case Two School respectively.

Observation

Observation has been characterized as 'the fundamental base of all research methods in social and behavioural sciences and as the mainstay of ethnographic study (Hammersley, 2006; Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007; Jeffrey and Troman, 2004). It is useful for ethnography and case studies (Litchman 2006) because it takes place in settings that already exist rather than in contrived settings. Hammersley and Atkinson (2007) emphasise that even studies that rely mainly on interviewing as a data collection technique employ observation to note body language and other gestural cues that lend meaning to the words of the persons being interviewed. Angrosino (2005) expresses similar views, pointing out that most social science researchers are observers both of human activities and of physical settings within which such activities take place. He (2005:730) contends that in social science research, as in legal work, "eyewitness testimony from trustworthy observers has been seen as a particularly convincing form of verification.

In both Case Schools, my observations involved going to each school every morning to evening (8am - 5pm) from Monday to Friday for six weeks. I focused on specific areas of the schools such as the staffrooms, school assemblies, classrooms and games. There were also isolated functions I observed including church services in the school chapel and a cultural day in Case One School. Thus, as Angrosino (2005) points out, although observation in qualitative research adopts a relatively 'unstructured' approach, I still had to make decisions about where, when and whom to observe.

I spent most of the time in the staffrooms and this gave me the advantage of 'shadowing' teachers through normal life, witnessing first hand and in detail the events and practices of interest (Denscombe, 1998). I regularly went to my car to write down brief notes of the observed phenomena because I was concerned that writing in the presence of the teachers would make them feel uneasy. In the evenings I made an elaborate write up of the activities observed. I also noted overheard comments, remarks and discussions by the teachers, for example, teachers commenting about discipline among students and how they (teachers) handle such matters.

One main advantage I got from observation is that it was useful in capturing situations as they were constructed in the day-to-day moment in the natural setting (Hammersley *et al.*, 2001).

Focus group discussions

Focus group discussion is a form of group interview where a researcher or a moderator facilitates a discussion with a small group of people on a specific topic (Morgan, 1988). It combines both elements of individual interviews and participant observation and normally involves six to eight people who have something in common (Casey and Krueger, 2000). To encourage wider participation and deal with dominant members the researcher or the moderator should make sure that all the group members are encouraged and given a chance to participate.

I used focus group discussions because, as Ferreira and Puth (1988) point out, the relatively informal group situation and the largely unstructured nature of the questions can encourage the participants to disclose behaviour and attitudes they might not disclose during individual interviews. This happens because participants such as students tend to feel more comfortable and secure in the company of people who share similar views and behaviour than in the company of individual interviewer (Folch-Lyon and Frost 1981). Equally, group interaction may "trigger thoughts and ideas among participants that do not emerge during individual interview" (Litchman, 2006:129).

I used semi-structured focus group discussion which, according to Litchman (2006), is an approach where the interviewer develops a list of questions and makes a preconceived plan as a guide but the group leads the way as much as possible. This helped me generate large quantities of material from relatively large numbers of people in a relatively short time (Kamberelis and

Dimitriadis, 2005). Kamberelis and Dimitriadis add that focus group discussions foreground the importance not only of content but also of expression, because they capitalize on the richness and complexity of group dynamics. In my study this was evident when one student made a point which triggered thoughts in other students who then added some more information on the point already raised or clarified it. Others would also contest the same issue bringing out the divergent perspectives. For example, in Case One School whilst some students considered specific practices in their school such as being made to keep short hair as normal, others viewed the same practices as undemocratic.

Focus group discussions, therefore, to a greater extent than observation and individual interviews, afforded me access to the kinds of social interaction dynamics that produce particular memories, positions, practices and desires among the students (Kamberelis and Dimitriadis, 2005). In addition, it enabled me to see the complex ways in which students positioned themselves to each other as they processed questions. I discuss in more detail the selection of the students who participated in the focus group discussions in each Case School in Chapters five and six. As seen in Appendix four, the questions in the focus group discussions explored the same issues as those in the interviews with the teachers but with a students' perspective in mind.

Informal conversations

Before and after the formal interviews I held informal conversations with the teachers exploring issues that emerged from my observations in the schools. Whilst the formal interviews were audio - recorded, I used my research journal to note down the issues covered in the informal conversations. As Pole and Morrison (2003) observe, conversations are a major element in any kind of ethnography field research not only as a source of data but may also be regarded as a method in their own right.

In my study, informal conversations were of two types. The first type was where I held discussions with a group of teachers or one teacher over general issues about education and in the process matters came up that were related to my study - in which case I pursued the matter and then noted the relevant points soon after the conversations. The second type involved seeking certain clarifications from the teachers or students over a phenomenon I had observed in the school. For example, in Case One School, there was an instance when a student led a sermon on a Wednesday morning in the school chapel attended by all the students and the majority of the teachers. After the sermon, I held an informal conversation with the Chaplain to find out who organised the services and how the students who led them were picked. I also sought to hold an informal talk with the student who led the sermon, which I did later at tea-break time for about 15 minutes. These conversations did not follow any specific pattern and were not tape recorded but I wrote down the issues as we discussed them.

Data Analysis

In qualitative research it is not easy to be precise in the initial stages of planning about the nature of the analytic techniques which will be employed (Hammersley *et al.*, 2001). This is because such techniques are less formalised than in quantitative research and because of the inductive nature of qualitative research. They, however, suggest that thematic analysis is one of the most commonly used methods of data analysis in qualitative research.

I used thematic analysis in this study in categorising the data collected through interviews, focus group discussions, observations and informal conversations. As the name implies, thematic analysis is the search for themes of relevance to the research topic under which reasonably large amounts of data from different sources - observations, interviews and documents - can be organised (Hammersley *et al.*, 2001). Braun and Clarke (2006) observe that thematic analysis is a method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data. They add that:

> thematic analysis is not wedded to any pre-existing theoretical framework, and therefore it can be used within different theoretical frameworks (although not all), and can be used to do different things within them. Thematic analysis reports experiences, meanings and the reality of participants, or it can be a constructionist method, which examines the ways in which events, realities, meanings, experiences and so on are the effects of a range of discourses operating within society (Braun and Clarke, 2006:81).

Thematic analysis is done first by reading and listing the patterns of experience from the transcribed data and field notes then identifying all the data that illustrate the patterns (Aronson, 1994). Related patterns are then combined into themes. Aronson suggests that the themes that emerge from

the informants' responses should be pieced together to form a comprehensive picture of their collective experience, adding that the researcher should build a valid argument for choosing the themes by reading and making inferences from the literature. The themes may concern the preoccupations of the people studied, recurrent features of their behaviour, key policy issues and so on (Hammersley *et al.*, 2001). It aims to 'understand' rather than 'know' the data (Marks and Yardley, 2004). The coding process (identifying and grouping together key issues in the data) depends on whether the themes are more 'data-driven' (emerging from the data) or 'theory-driven' (approaching the data with specific questions in mind that the researcher wishes to code around) (Braun and Clarke, 2006).

I used thematic analysis because, as Braun and Clarke (2006) point out, a theme captures something important about the data in relation to the research question and represents some level of patterned response or meaning within the data set. Whilst some of my themes were derived from the literature, the developmental conception of democracy (Woods, 2004, 2005, 2006 and Woods and Woods 2008) and elements of democratic school leadership (Møller, 2006), others were derived from the data. There were also sub-themes that were all derived from the data. Thus my data analysis processes were both inductive (with some themes derived from the data) and theoretical (based on the themes derived from the literature). Using a thematic analysis approach also enabled me to link the patterns that emerged from the principals', teachers' and students' responses and my observations together, and create some common ground in relation to how they might bear on the

research questions. Thus, as Marks and Yardley (2004) emphasise, thematic analysis provides a good audit trail from data collection to synthesis of results.

My initial step involved 'open' coding, which entails developing categories of information from the data by examining the text (transcripts and field notes) or salient categories of information supported by the text (Creswell, 2007). It included attaching the analytical categories from the literature to each interview, focus group discussion, informal conversation and observed data. I did this by reading through my data and writing down the categories into which each data section fitted, for example, students' voice, social care among students, equity and justice and so on.

I then moved to the next stage, 'axial' coding which, as Creswell (2007) explains, involves interconnecting the categories identified in the open coding and returning to the database to understand the categories that relate to this central phenomenon. It also involves reviewing the database or collecting new data to provide insight into specific coding categories that relate or explain the central phenomena. Thus, it required that I combine extracts from different sources, interviews, focus group discussions, observations and informal conversations under similar themes. For example, in each Case school, I put together all the extracts that showed student voice, teachers' collaboration and so on.

In the final stage, 'selective' coding, involves building a story that connects the categories (Creswell, 2007), I picked out the extracts that best illustrated my themes, identifying complementary and contrasting points of view from the

various data sources (students, teachers and principals). I did this by highlighting events, developing a 'story', examining group interaction and showing the different perspectives through the views of the participants. As seen in Chapters four (Phase One), five (Case One School) and six (Case Two School), I also generated comparisons and patterned regularities in the data. My interpretations involved drawing inferences from the data from Phase One, Case One School and Case Two School as well as from the literature, as discussed in Chapter seven.

I used the data analysis package Nvivo8 to facilitate allocation of data into various categories and the retrieval of the same. This involved creating tree nodes, allocating the themes to each of the nodes, giving it a title and storing all the relevant extracts under the titles. The advantage of using NVivo8 was in its hierarchical nature that made it easy for me to maintain a link between the elements of democratic school leadership, the sub-categories and the specific illustrations whilst at the same time comparing the responses of the participants and observations at each node (see Appendix two).

Ethical Considerations

It is very challenging to act ethically when conducting research in institutions such as schools. This is because apart from seeking formal access from the gatekeepers to conduct research within the schools, there is a need to seek further access and informed consent from the individual teachers and students to be interviewed or observed. Equally, as Stake (2005) points out, qualitative researchers are guests in a private space of the world and

therefore their manners should be good and their code of ethics strict. Stake asserts that a kind of silent informal contract exists between the researcher and the researched which provides the participants with a protective cover.

Two critical aspects of ethics are informed consent and confidentiality. The idea of informed consent goes along with providing the participants with full information about the nature of the study. Apart from that, confidentiality and anonymity are also used to try to reduce participants' fears and encourage them to take part in research (Walford, 2008b). However, Van-den-Hoonard (2002) contends that they can be a problem, especially in observational research where it may be difficult to clarify all the issues to be observed, because in most cases the issues emerge in the course of observation. Even researchers whose work is overt sometimes engage in active deception, for example participants may be given a false impression that the researcher "agrees with their views when he or she does not" (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995:265). Hammersley and Atkinson suggest that all that is required of researchers is that they take due note of the ethical aspects of their work and make the best judgement they can in the circumstances. Most significantly, as Gregory (2003) maintains, is that research should always be undertaken in a manner that presents minimum risk to both the participants and the researcher. That is:

> The researcher should do all he or she reasonably can to ensure that the information made available, and the conditions under which it is received and (as it were) processed encourage the belief that consent granted is fully informed and voluntarily given (Gregory, 2003:39).

Angrosino (2005) suggests that the researchers need to use their experience as well as plain common sense, as well as apply their intuition to know that

some actions are inherently disproportionate, even if we do not have personal experience for their being so.

To this end, I applied and got 'clearance' from the Open University Ethics Committee (ref: Appendix five). As seen in Appendix six, in Kenya, I was granted a four year research permit by the Ministry of Education, Kenya (2006-2009) to conduct research in schools. After getting the clearances, I took letters (see Appendix seven) to school principals seeking access to conduct research in their schools. In the letter I explained in detail what my research involved. I also made it clear that I would need to interview the principals, some teachers and also hold focus group discussions with the students. Equally, I explained that I needed to be in the schools for six weeks observing events and activities in the schools.

In both Case Schools, once granted access and introduced to the teachers in the staffroom and students in the assemblies, I explained to each of the teachers who were interviewed about the study and told them that it was their choice to accept or refuse to be interviewed. I also informed them that even though the interviews were to be recorded the information would remain anonymous. As was the case with the principals, I gave the teachers letters explaining the details of the research (ref: Appendix eight). However, I did not give them consent letters to sign because, in Kenya, this could cause suspicion and affect the interviews. People fear signing such binding documents. I had explained the same to the Open University Ethics committee. I therefore got verbal consent from the teachers.

I also got informed consent from the students who were in the focus group discussions (about 15-19 years) so that in spite of the overall access granted by the principals, the students would not feel coerced to participate. I explained to the students the nature of the study and told them that none of them would be victimised for what they discussed with me. I reminded them that although the discussions would be audio-recorded, they would remain anonymous and informed them that those who did not want to participate were free to withdraw at any time. As in the case with the teachers, I did not give them consent forms to sign but got consent from the boarding teachers who are in charge of the students' welfare in the schools. This is because the students were 'boarders' and therefore it would be difficult getting consent from the parents. I got verbal consent from the students who were in the focus group discussions in the two Case Schools.

Fieldwork experiences

The process of data collection is always loaded with expectations. "Even where people in a setting are familiar with social research, there may be a serious mismatch between their expectations of the researcher and his or her intentions" (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007: 64). Similarly, the researcher also has expectations of the research context and participants which may get modified or change as the fieldwork progresses. During fieldwork, the researcher may meet challenges ranging from participants being more concerned with what kind of person the researcher is than with the research itself (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007) to events or activities that were not

anticipated interrupting the study. In this study, I had my expectations and challenges but, which added to my fieldwork experiences.

Expectations

One of my pre-conceptions was about the difficulty of accessing a national school for research. Based on my experience as a student and later as a high school teacher for five years in Kenya, I always held the view that getting access to conduct research in a national school, especially those ones that were previously high cost schools was extremely difficult. This was because of their elitist nature. In my original plan, I never intended to access a national school. Whilst in the field, I decided not to let my pre-conceptions inhibit my fieldwork and wrote a letter to one of the national schools and took it personally to the principal. To my surprise, it turned out to be one of my richest experiences during the field work. The Principal was not only welcoming but very humble. She agreed to be interviewed and gave me a lot of time during the interview. After my preliminary data analysis (in Phase One of the study), it turned out to be one of my Case Schools. Later when I interviewed her, she explained that humility is one of the virtues the school upheld and wanted to inculcate in the students which also explained her humility in handling students, teachers and visitors.

Another point had to do with the sensitivity of my topic to school principals. I had expected that the school principals would find some of the issues that I was investigating sensitive and would not be willing to discuss them in detail, specifically their use of democratic school leadership practices as required by

the government. Again to my surprise, during my initial interviews with the 12 principals I found that the principals were very free to talk about the fact that they did not implement democratic school leadership as required by the government. Equally, most of the principals went as far as criticising the Ministry of Education officials for what some of them (principals) considered 'preaching water but drinking wine'. That is, whilst the government expected the principals to be democratic, the Ministry of Education officials did not treat them (principals) in a similar manner. I got an impression that the principals hardly got a chance to discuss what they considered their 'frustrations' with the Ministry of Education. I was, however, careful not to give an impression that I would help solve their 'frustrations' with the Ministry of Education.

Challenges

The greatest challenge to my study was political violence. Half way through my fieldwork, after conducting the preliminary interviews in Phase One of my study, post-elections violence broke out in Kenya on 31st December 2007, because of alleged rigging of elections. The violence took a more ethnic than political dimension and resulted in over 1300 deaths and several hundreds of thousands hospitalised and displaced according to reports by the Kenyan Police. This affected my field work in two major ways. One was that initially, I could not access my Case Two School which was in a rural area because all the roads were blocked by protesters. They inspected all the vehicles and if one was perceived to belong to an opposing political party - judged by ethnicity then s/he would be removed and harmed. Fortunately, my Case One School was located within a town where the police provided more

security and the students had reported to school. So, I went on with my fieldwork whenever it was possible to do so and later, when the violence calmed down, I was able to travel to my second case school. Even then, I still found sporadic protesters on the way to the school and on a number of occasions I had to pay them to pass through the roadblocks because they claimed they were fighting for 'us'. Because I passed the same road every day during working days, they got to know me and allowed me to pass without much problem.

The second problem relating to the violence was in dealing with the teachers. As I was 'hanging around' in the schools, some teachers expected me (because of my ethnicity) to agree with their political view-points. They would engage me in political talk that I was reluctant to indulge in so as to maintain my impartiality. In most instances, I remained quiet. A few times, I explained to the teachers that I did not want to engage in the discussions because I needed to be impartial in my dealing with all the teachers. I also experienced the same kind of challenge with teachers who thought they were being treated unfairly and not recommended for promotion by the school administration because of their ethnic affiliations. Some engaged me in whispers in the staffroom and, as much as I wanted to hear details about the perceived discrimination, I found it difficult to ask questions in whispers. I would request that we take a walk outside the staffroom in order for me to hear their stories.

Equally, linked to the political violence was the challenge in interviewing the teachers who were directly affected by the violence (had their property burnt

down or relatives harmed). Whilst finding out how they were treated by their colleagues and the school administration, I did not want to cause them more pain by reminding them of the experiences. At the same time it was important to find out if there was an ethic of care and concern by their colleagues, which is one of the elements of democratic school leadership. Before conducting the interviews with such teachers, I asked them if it was acceptable to them that I ask some questions relating to the violence.

Another challenge I faced was what Hammersley and Atkinson (2007:64) refer to as participants who "consider themselves to be very sophisticated in their knowledge of research methodology". One of the principals I interviewed in phase one of the study (P4) had undertaken a master's degree in education administration and management and attended some courses on proposal writing offered by the British Council. When I went to see her to fix an appointment for an interview which she had accepted earlier through her secretary, she wondered why I was using an interview and not questionnaire. She 'lectured' me on how a questionnaire was useful in conducting the kind of study I was doing because it would help me reach a larger number of school principals. She remarked that she had used a questionnaire in her Masters Degree study in which she used principals as participants and found it very suitable. I remained non committal to her argument and she finally gave me an appointment for an interview

In another school, the principal, because she knew that I worked in a university, complained to me that one of our student trainees who had been in her school for teaching practice was harassing the school girls. She told me

that she dismissed the trainee and wondered why 'we' at the university did not provide adequate training to the trainee teachers 'these days'. In some way, I gave her the impression that I agreed with her viewpoint even if I did not.

Lastly, although I had planned to attend and observe some meetings in both Case Schools, I was not able to. In both the schools, the teachers involved appeared reluctant to have me attend the meetings, for example departmental meetings in Case One School.

Despite these challenges, I was able to get sufficient data for my study and the challenges served as part of my learning experience in fieldwork and not as weaknesses (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007; Silverman, 2005).

Summary

In this rather long chapter, I have discussed:

- The philosophical paradigm that informed my study; the relativist ontology and interpretive-constructionist epistemology along with elements of postmodernism. I have also explained how these differ from the realist ontology and positivist as well as postpostivist epistemology.
- The qualitative methods and the ethnographic case study approach that I adopted. I have justified why my study qualifies as 'time compressed' ethnography and, as a collective and instrumental case study.

- The use of terms credibility, transferability, dependability, confirmability and triangulation to ensure the trustworthiness of my study.
- The pilot study, the changes I made after that and the instruments of data collection including interviews, observations, focus group discussions and informal conversations. I have also explained how I used thematic analysis to analyse my data.
- The ethical requirements and how I met each of them in my study.
- My data collection experiences, highlighting the expectations and challenges I faced during the fieldwork.

In the next chapter, I provide detailed discussion of the data collection process and analysis of the data collected in Phase One of my study.

CHAPTER FOUR: PHASE ONE OF THE STUDY

Introduction

As discussed in Chapter three, Phase One of data collection arose out of the need to develop a rationale for selecting the two schools that were used as cases and to generate background information on democratic school leadership. I interviewed 12 school principals because I wanted to capture as many divergent views as possible about how school principals perceived their leadership practices. I had four months (September 2007- December 2007) within which to conduct the interviews, do some preliminary data analysis and select the two schools.

In identifying the 12 schools, I considered their location because some schools were not easily accessible, especially when it rained. Equally, I wanted the schools in the same geographical area to make my movement from one school to another easier. My approach was purposive and, after obtaining a list of principals from the local district education office, the key factors I considered when identifying the principals included:

- The government categorisation of schools (national, provincial and district). I obtained access to one national school, six provincial schools and five district schools.
- Experience – here I wanted to capture the variation between principals with many years of service and others more recently appointed to the role. I categorised the informants into senior principal (over 10 years), middle level (five to 10 years) and junior principal (less than five years). I interviewed five senior, three middle level and four junior principals.

- Gender composition of the students. I had two boys' schools, four girls' schools and six mixed schools. In Kenya, girls' schools are predominantly headed by women whilst boys' schools are led by men. The mixed schools are either led by women or men. My sample consisted of five female principals and seven male principals.
- Boarding and day schools; the sample here included six boarding schools, five day schools and one boarding/day school.
- The location of the school; whether in the rural areas or in urban centres. In this category there were five urban schools, two suburban and five rural schools.

As seen in table 1, I allocated each principal a code P1- P12 corresponding with the order in which I conducted the interviews. I used the codes to help maintain their anonymity.

Table 1: Principals' Experiences and Type of Schools

PRINCIPAL	QUALIFICATION	TRAINING	YEARS IN SERVICE	YEARS AS PRINCIPAL	TYPE OF SCHOOL	GRADE OF SCHOOL	LOCATION	NO. OF TEACHERS	NO. OF STUDENTS
P1- F	BEd	--------	30	27	Girls Boarding	National	Urban	70	800
P2- F	BEd	KESI 1 & 2	13	3	Mixed Day	District	Urban	08	180
P3- F	BEd MEd- ongoing PT	KESI 1, 2, 3	17	7	Girls Boarding	Provincial	Rural	27	465
P4- F	BEd, MEd	KESI 1,2,3; SMASE	18	12	Girls Boarding	Provincial	Urban	20	300
P5- M	BEd	KESI 1,2,3	25	14	Mixed Day	Provincial	Urban	26	430
P6- M	BSc, PGD Ed	KESI 1,2,3	17	4	Boys Boarding	Provincial	Suburban	31	519
P7- M	BEd	KESI 1,2	12	9	Mixed Day & Boarding	District	Rural	17	282
P8- M	Bed, MEd	KESI 1,2	24	17	Mixed Day	District	Suburban	15	170
P9- M	BEd	KESI 1,2	26	7	Mixed Day	District	Rural	10	200
P10- F	BEd, MEd (ongoing PT)	KESI 1,2	15	5	Girls Boarding	District	Rural	15	272
P11- M	BEd	KESI 1,2	13	5	Boys Boarding	Provincial	Rural	32	643
P12- M	BEd	KESI 1	29	15	Mixed Day	Provincial	Urban	46	720

BEd Bachelor of Education
F Female
KESI Kenya Education Staff Institute (Training)
M Male
Med Masters of Education
PGD Post Graduate Diploma
PT Part Time
SMASSE Strengthening Mathematics and Science in Secondary Education

Data Collection

The interviews lasted between 45 minutes to one hour. However, as discussed in Chapter three, in some schools the principals had so much to say that the sessions lasted over one hour. The interviews provided me with the opportunity to establish a rapport with individual principals whose schools I later used for the case studies.

Analysis of the data

In my analysis, I grouped the principals according to the government grading of the schools - national, provincial and district schools (details in chapter one, '*the school system*'). According to the grading system, the national schools are expected to have more experienced principals followed by the provincial and lastly, the district schools. However, as seen in table 4.1, this is not always the case. In the category of national schools, I interviewed one principal (P1), in provincial schools I interviewed six principals (P3, P4, P5, P6, P11, and P12) and five principals in district schools (P2, P7, P8, P9, and P10).

National school

Qualification and training of the principal

P1 had been a principal for 27 years and was appointed after being a teacher for only three years. She thought she was appointed so early after her Bachelor's degree because in her ethnic community at that time (1980), she was one of the few female teachers with a degree and also because she was married and a Christian – thus, considered a role model for the girls from her community. At the time of the interview, she had been the principal in the school for 24 years (since 1983). She succeeded a white woman who was her former teacher and her "mentor from O-level to A-level". She stated that, because she was inexperienced at the time and considered herself "fairly

young", she did not want to be appointed a principal of a national school. She remarked that she was not given a chance by the government and politicians from her ethnic community to refuse because "they wanted a local woman to be the principal of the school".

As seen in table 4.1, unlike all the other principals interviewed, she had never attended any other training on school management offered by the Kenya Education Staff Institute (KESI) except for the occasional workshops organised by the Kenya Secondary School Heads Association (KSSHA).

Perceptions of democratic school leadership

According to this informant, democratic school leadership means allowing people to participate and contribute to issues that affect their lives either directly or indirectly in the school. She pointed out that when she first came to the school issues of democracy in schools were never discussed by the government or parents:

> I used coercion and persuasion to run the school. But that was then, with time, changes on human rights have come into the world and they have found their way into schools. Earlier on, it was okay for a principal to run the school without involving others. I was the sole decision marker... because I was supposed to know everything. But that is now outdated. The principal of today is not the sole decision-maker. She is the coordinator in the new management arrangement. So, now I encourage teachers to change and be more democratic when dealing with students. We need to consult the students and get ideas on what they need. Students have good ideas on how to be taught, how to manage themselves. We now ask students about their meals and the way it should be cooked, which was never the case before (P1).

The principal remarked that the word "compulsion" was never used in the school, adding that teachers used guidance and counselling instead of corporal punishment to handle discipline matters among students. P1 pointed

out that she regularly held open discussions with individual students, for example, during that period (September 2007- December 2007) she was meeting individual Form Four students (17 years) who were preparing for their KCSE national examinations. These meetings were held every Sunday in the afternoon. Each student had about five minutes and she listened to their plans for the examinations and the courses they planned to do at the university. P1 stated that she also met students in classes if there was need, for example, if they had "problems with their accommodation", but added that such cases were handled by the various teachers in charge. She therefore considered her leadership practices democratic.

Perceived democratic practices

School culture

The principal observed that one way of maintaining democracy in the school was by developing a strong culture of honesty and humility:

> We consider the students very important. We discuss that among ourselves as teachers. They are our customers and we must take care of them, even if it means apologising because you missed a lesson. If you do apologise those girls will not complain. You just explain to them when you are going to 'make up' (P1).

P1 explained further that the school had developed a vision, a mission, a motto and a strategic plan and that every teacher and every student who joined the school was expected to learn the ideals and values in these documents. For example, when new students reported in Form One, teachers organised a one-week induction programme for them on discipline, academic performance, the role of prefects, their safety in the school as well as the general operations in the school including learning the school song.

She asserted that the induction served as the "entry point for all the students, after which the socialisation structure does its work".

Religion

She considered that religion played a big role in socialising the students into the school culture and inculcating values such as love and commitment:

> All students are equal. We only have two groups, the Christians and the Muslims. Although most teachers are Christians, when Muslims are observing Ramadan, we cook their special food so that they feel they are part of one family. We have had *Wazungus* (Swahili word for 'whites'), *Wahindis* (Asians), but we emphasise the fact that we are a family and we do things this way. We have in our strategic plan our love guidelines, the first one is God fearing then we have adaptability and finally commitment. These are core values that we stress and through them we bring out the best in our students (P1).

School structure

P1 stated that she involved teachers in most management issues in the school including "financial management". For example, when preparing the school budget for the year, she pointed out that departments were expected to discuss their requirements and plan a budget that included travel and tours, laboratory equipment, co-curricular activities and so on. These were then submitted to the Senior Management Committee which comprised the Principal, the Deputy Principal, the Director of Studies, the Chaplain and Bursar. The committee drew up the final budget before it was presented to the Parents Executive Committee (PEC) and then to the Board of Governors (BoG) for approval.

To facilitate democratic school leadership, she explained that the school had various structures in place, for example, the guidance and counselling

committee headed by the Chaplain, the Disciplinary committee headed by the Deputy Principal, the Academic board headed by the Director of Studies, the Games committee headed by the Games teacher. Each department held a meeting and nominated a teacher to each of the committees. According to P1, the structure facilitated democratic school leadership because it made clear the roles of each teacher or group of teachers in a committee and thus prevented duplication of roles. It also helped students know where their concerns could be addressed.

The school had developed a strategic plan which clarified what the school should achieve within five years in terms of physical development and students' achievement. The Principal explained that the strategic plan also highlighted the target each teacher was expected to achieve. When developing the plan, the Senior Management Committee divided teachers into groups, each handling a different matter, such as boarding facilities, learning facilities, co-curricular facilities, academic and performance. Each group sought the students' views before submitting their report.

She considered her leadership approach democratic and suitable for the school because it made work easier for her, the teachers and the students. However, she commented that because of her 'democratic approach', there were teachers who sometimes took advantage by not performing their duties as expected. She gave an example of a male teacher whom she discovered was sexually harassing the students and had him dismissed:

> I have lost three teachers because it came to our knowledge that they had established a sexual relationship with students and after we did our investigations, they were interdicted and then removed from the register and that sent a message to the others. When I get new teachers, I take my time

> and talk to them freely about many issues in the school including what happens should they get involved with the girls in love affairs (P1).

She observed that the school held talks with the girls and allowed them to watch television and read newspapers which were put in the library and these exposed them (girls) to a lot of literature on their rights:

> Lately, we also educate the girls. I talk to the girls about their rights, the rights to speak their minds, to be respected by males, the rights of a lady, the dignity of women. We emphasise that when there is something they find disturbing they should report to me or the Deputy Principal, the Chaplain or any other person they are comfortable with in the school (P1).

Provincial schools

In this category of schools, I interviewed six principals as seen in table 2 below.

Table 2: Provincial Schools Principals' Training and Qualifications

Principal	Qualification	Training	Years in service	Years as principal	Type of school	Location	No of Teachers	No of Students
3- F	BEd MEd- ongoing PT	KESI 1, 2, 3	17	7	Girls Boarding	Rural	27	465
4- F	BEd, MEd	KESI 1,2,3; SMASE	18	12	Girls Boarding	Urban	20	300
5- M	BEd	KESI 1,2,3	25	14	Mixed Day	Urban	26	430
6- M	BSc, PGD Ed	KESI 1,2,3	17	4	Boys Boarding	Suburban	31	519
11- M	BEd	KESI 1,2	13	5	Boys Boarding	Rural	32	643
12- M	BEd	KESI 1	29	15	Mixed Day	Urban	46	720

NB: extracted from table 4.1

BEd	Bachelor of Education
F	Female
KESI	Kenya Education Staff Institute (Training)
M	Male
Med	Masters of Education
PGD	Post Graduate Diploma
PT	Part Time
SMASSE	Strengthening Mathematics and Science in Secondary Education

Qualification and training of principals

Each of the principals interviewed in this category had Bachelor's degree which was a basic requirement by the TSC for one to be promoted to head a secondary school in Kenya. Equally, all the principals had attended the KESI training on school management and leadership. Whilst some had attended all the three levels (P4, P5, P6), others had either attended level one or levels one and two. They had also attended the occasional workshops organised by the Kenya Secondary School Heads Association (KSSHA). According to the principals, these workshops mostly covered topics on general school management such as changes in the syllabus, financial management and public relations. They all pointed out that, although the KESI courses were important in helping them come up with solutions to some the challenges of school management especially regarding finances, they felt that the courses were inadequate. They suggested that the KESI courses should be offered before one was appointed a school principal and be expanded to include more topics such as those relating to democratic school leadership.

The majority of the principals also pointed out that the Bachelor's degree qualifications from the university did not prepare them adequately for the expected roles:

> Having a Bachelor's degree is insufficient for one to be a principal because we learn to be a teacher but nothing in our training at college prepares one for the current kind of leadership in schools. What we leant was actually a traditional kind of leadership, things like laissez-faire, but when it comes to actual management of a school, there is nothing that prepares a principal. Training on critical areas such as financial management should also be done earlier (P6).

Perceptions of democratic school leadership

Most of the principals in this category perceived democratic school leadership to be the kind that allows for participation by the teachers, students, and parents in school management. One principal observed that:

> Currently, participation by stakeholders in school management is the trend because schools are being asked by the government to adopt democracy. But I should say that we do not have clear guidelines on how to do this...So, I try to involve the teachers in decision making at different times. For example, right now we are making a programme for next year. So, we start from the subject teachers who will make proposals at the subject level and then bring them to the department. Then in a departmental meeting they are discussed and polished. They can make alterations or confirm what the subject teachers had proposed. This is then brought to the management committee (P3).
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> .

Like the Principal in the national school, the majority of the principals in the provincial schools linked the demand for democratic school leadership to the changes taking place all over the world that required more open approach to leadership than in the past when the principal was solely responsible for decision-making in the school:

> Democratic school leadership is a good idea, because you realize now school management is changing. When I reflect back in 1995 when I became a principal it was a one man's show and with that you were bound to be blamed and held liable for so many things. But now the society is changing and more people know their rights. And, when I involve other stakeholders I achieve a lot because I have a wider approach to the management of the institution (P4).

All the principals in this category considered that enabling teachers perform their duties without hindrance was part of democracy. This is because, as one principal pointed out, "before the idea of democracy was floated by the government, a teacher would have to keep referring back to the principal to perform duties allocated to him or her in the school" (P11).

Suitability of democratic school leadership

All principals in this category considered democratic school leadership suitable for their schools because it enhanced the achievement of school goals and encouraged teamwork. One principal commented that: "when you implement something and teachers know they are the ones who suggested it then that brings a sense of belonging and boosts their morale" (P6).

The principals seemed to agree that democratic school leadership was more applicable when dealing with the teachers than with students and parents. For example, P12 claimed that the government "interfered" a lot with the management of schools by insisting that the principals needed to get consent from parents to implement policies related to school finances. He argued that the same conditions were not set for the national schools where he claimed the principals made decisions without 'interference' from the government or parents:

> What the government is saying is what should be practised, but the support it gives us to practise it is almost nil. If the government left schools to do their own things, democratic leadership would always succeed because, I would refer to schools like*****. The public don't interfere with them. Even the Ministry of Education goes by the 'laws' of those schools.. But schools at our level have to go back to the parents and seek consent. With the teachers, democratic leadership can work very well. I also find the Board of Governors very polite. They are the ones who understand. They are very good but not the PTA members. For example, I wanted to come up with a fund which we would use to motivate our students and teachers whenever they did well in national examinations. It was rejected by PTA members. That is where democracy becomes tricky (P12).

Another principal (P4) stated that she found it difficult to implement democratic school leadership because it was abused by the students:

> I have tried holding *barazas* [Swahili word for informal public meetings] like two weeks ago I had a *baraza* with the Form Four students to give their views on what they want us to do for them. At class level democracy may work but

> at times the students want to blame the teachers, the administration and this interferes with the working atmosphere because the teachers get offended (P4).

P4 seemed to suggest that students should not be given the freedom to express their displeasure with teachers and the school administration, thus putting into question how genuine she was in holding the *barazas*. She gave another example of *barazas* where the students expressed the need for a school canteen but she told them that she did not think it was necessary because the students were given adequate food in the school. She seemed to suggest that the canteen was only meant to sell food which might not be the case because it could sell other items such as toiletries. Another principal (P5) argued that democratic school leadership was both advantageous and disadvantageous:

> You know democratic management has its pros and cons. In the old system, the principal would simply give directives and it was good because you get things done without question, but it had its limitation. Sometimes it would build resentments because people do not feel they own the decisions. They do it because they have been told to do it. People these days are more aware of their rights, they want to question things, they want to do things in certain ways that they like..., But where there is democratic participation, you find that people feel they own the decisions, they feel they are part of the system and therefore they implement the decisions easily, but it sometimes takes too long to get things done (P5).

External 'Interference'

Some principals expressed the view that the government interfered with the management of secondary schools. For example, P6 provided an example of a case where the Ministry of Education directed principals to release certificates they were withholding in schools because the students had not paid all the school fees. He insisted that the principals were not consulted and commented that it was a political decision because it was an election year and the government wanted to coerce parents so that the parents would

vote for the government of the day. He criticised the Ministry of Education for not consulting the principals over the issue yet continuing to expect principals to collect school fees in full. He considered the decision contradictory and undemocratic. He criticised the government for "preaching water but drinking wine".

Another principal (P3) gave an example where the Government insisted that principals charge school fees based on the guidelines produced in 1997 despite the change in inflation:

> You see, the government says you must involve stakeholders in decision-making in schools. But at the same time, the Ministry of Education is also a stakeholder but again they rarely involve principals in the decisions they make that affect the schools. The other time they were fighting over affordable fees for secondary schools, a directive that was released in 1997 and is still in operation up to now, 2007 yet the price of electricity, sugar, basically everything has gone up. We need more money to feed these students in school. So, the Ministry itself is not democratic in approaching these issues (P3).

Overall, most of the principals in provincial schools felt that democratic school leadership was only suitable for the teachers but not students for whom they used corporal punishment.

Corporal punishment

All principals in this category acknowledged that they used corporal punishment in their schools even though it was illegal, claiming that it was culturally acceptable:

> ...you know the African child, after being used to corporal punishment for too long, then one day you wake up and tell them that '*from today you will not be getting corporal punishment*'. They will take time to adjust (P3).

One principal (P12) claimed that democratic school leadership suited students from Asian and affluent backgrounds unlike those from the 'slums':

> I think I can say, properly brought up children don't require corporal punishment. But, if you are caning the children at home, then the school should be allowed to cane. We bring our children up in a manner the parents support. You see we have Asian children and those from affluent homes, you make a mistake of caning or pinching them and they become completely affected because they are not used to that at home. The way we manage our students at home is the same way they should be handled in school... We have a problem with those from the slums who are hardy and problematic and we have to cane them (P12).

This claim by P12 puts into question issues of equity and social justice in dealing with students equally regardless of their ethnic, racial and socio-economic background, which I discuss in detail in Chapter seven.

A similar argument was advanced by P5 who insisted that democratic school leadership could only work well in national schools where, according to him, most students came from affluent backgrounds and were used to being guided and counselled rather than corporal punishment. He remarked that it might also work better in the boarding schools where it was easy to contain the students within the school unlike the day schools:

> We had cases where some students would come to school and in their bags they would be carrying civilian clothes. Then sometimes they go as if they are going to the field, then quietly they sneak through the fence out of the school compound and then at some toilet or bush somewhere they change out of school uniform into civilian clothes and stay out there the whole day. In the evening, they change back into school uniform and sneak back. And in town anything can happen, so urban day schools are very difficult to manage and you cannot be democratic with the students. I think it easier in boarding schools (P5).

His argument that it might be easier to deal with students democratically in boarding schools was not convincing because the principals in boarding schools also argued that they had their unique issues. For example, P11 who was in a provincial boarding school claimed that he used corporal punishment

for those students he referred to as "notorious". Like most of those interviewed earlier, he argued that the Ministry of Education should have consulted principals before banning corporal punishment:

> There was no consultation before the banning of corporal punishment but you still find that when a student commits a serious offence and you send him or her home, when a parent comes with the child he says, '*give me a cane, I want to cane this boy*'. Others are so emotional you have to restrain them. They even want to fight with the child inside here. So, parents and teachers know it's illegal to cane but they feel that at one point it helps. Counselling which is an alternative is not new, it has been there but those who are notorious cannot listen to counselling. Again when you extend punishment the student does not relate the punishment with the mistake made but caning is instant (P11).

P5 gave another example of some of the students who brought alcohol to the school and who had to be given corporal punishment:

> There are those three quarters of the students you will counsel and they listen but there are some hard-cores. You see, the environment from which these students come, conditions them. We really have to balance between the rights of the child and instilling discipline... Some secretly carry *Chang'aa* [locally brewed alcohol] and drugs to school. Last week and spilling over to this week we have been dealing with cases of some students who came with juice laced with alcohol on Saturday when we do not have all the teachers coming to school except those with lessons. Because on that day we do not have very tight monitoring process, some students carried the drinks in their bags then during tea break they went to the toilets 'swallowed' then came back to class and you could feel the smell. So, we called the parents and made the parents to cane their sons in the presence of their classmates to act as a deterrent to the others (P5).

This principal also stated that the school regularly conducted pregnancy test on the girls so that those who were pregnant were identified early and suspended from the school. He stated that a girl nearly died in the school while attempting to secure an abortion:

> She went and lay in the grass, but some of the girls who had noticed she was looking unwell followed her and then all we heard was noise, then the other students rushed there. It was very embarrassing. We took her to hospital for treatment. From there on we agreed with the teachers that we do pregnancy tests for the girls at the beginning of every term. It was a bit controversial, some parents said, '*no we don't want our children to be taken through such, it is embarrassing, and it's a violation of their human rights*'. But we had agreed as a staff... then we took it to the PTA annual general meeting and the PTA said *'yes, let's do it'*. It has helped us. Even though the girls

> opposed it, but they had no choice. So, in such cases you cannot talk of democracy or else the school can get messed up (P5).

Perceived democratic practices in the schools

Although the principals expressed reservations about dealing with the students democratically, they identified some practices that most of them considered democratic. These practices included the election of prefects, class and house meetings.

Election of prefects

Most of the principals in the provincial schools pointed out that they allowed students to elect prefects, although in all schools the teachers vetted the final list of the students who were elected. The principals mentioned that the teachers considered good conduct, performance in class and ability to manage other students when vetting those who had been elected. Other principals such as P5 and P6 stated that in their schools the students who wanted to be prefects applied and were then interviewed by the teachers. P6 noted that he considered this process democratic because in the past teachers used to appoint the prefects without giving the students a chance to apply:

> We believe in 'guided democracy'. For example, once in a year, we invite all students interested in serving as prefects in various capacities to apply. They apply to the principal and then teachers sit and vet the names of those who have applied for various posts. Before we do that, we ask the teachers to try, during class meetings, to gauge from the students those they may want in various posts. Then during staff meetings we get reports from the class teachers. We try where we can, to take the students' views into consideration. We tried the election but it flopped miserably because we had students who were populists being elected but were not helping others in managing their affairs (P6).

In each of the schools, the prefects held regular meetings with the deputy principal, who according to the TSC regulations was in charge of school discipline, to discuss the needs of the students:

> We utilize the prefects' body a lot, they hold frequent meetings with the Deputy Principal, and I don't really interfere with them unless there is a need. They have very frequent meetings with the deputy where they propose what should be done. We also give them a role in terms of organizing school functions such as debates with other schools (P4).

Class and house meetings

All the principals interviewed in this category pointed out that they allowed students to hold class meeting to discuss their academic issues which were then forwarded to the teachers through the class prefects. In the boarding schools, the principals stated that they allowed students to hold house meetings as well to discuss issues affecting them in the dormitories such as cleanliness, noise and the general conditions of the dormitory.

Apart from the class and house meetings, one principal (P6) observed that he held regular meetings with students in different classes:

> We have class meetings where they discuss issues that affect them with their class teachers. We also have the dormitory meetings and then I have regular weekly meetings on rotational basis with groups of students. I pick a class, and talk to them on a Sunday afternoon. The next time I go to the next form so that by the end of the term I would have talked to all the students. We also have other avenues where they can air their views such as a suggestion box which is only accessible to me. This is because of confidentiality, for personal things the students would want to share with me. When I get anything in suggestion box, which concerns a certain department, I go there and say *'this issue is happening, could it be sorted out, and let me be given a report on the same'*. These avenues reduce tension in the school (P6).

When dealing with the teachers, all principals in the provincial schools stated that they were more democratic because it made the teachers feel they owned and supported the programmes in the school. Some of the decision-

making areas that the teachers participated in included helping draw school budgets.

Participating in budget preparation and planning of work

The principals allowed the departments to prepare their own budgets. For example P3 stated that:

> When there are decisions to be made, for example, right now we are making a programme for next year including the budget. We start from the subject teacher who makes proposals at the subject level, and then brings them to the department...Then in a departmental meeting they discuss, polish, make alterations or confirm what the subject teachers had proposed in the budget. Then from there, I hold meetings with the heads of department where we discus these proposals (P3).

Staff meetings and staff briefings

All the principals stated that they updated the teachers on some of the matters going on in the school which they considered to be part of democracy. For example, P12 pointed out that he held weekly briefings with the teachers:

> We have briefings every week on Tuesday at 10 am normally chaired by the Teacher on Duty (ToD) who updates the rest of the teachers on the day-to-day occurrences in the school, such as when we have activities taking place in the school within the week. This makes the teachers feel that we are together. Then, if there are emerging issues of discipline or purchases which have been made and the items delivered to the school, I make teachers aware so that they always know of developments in the school (P12).

On staff meetings, P12 observed that he permits teachers come up with the school policies through staff meetings which were held every three weeks. Departments also held their meeting within the three weeks period and were encouraged to identify ways in which performance in their subject could be improved. These were then presented in the next staff meeting.

Informal consultations

Apart from the formal meetings, the majority of the principals in this category stated that they consulted teachers informally on various matters such as games and other extra-curricular activities. For example, P11 observed that he consulted the teachers even if he knew that he had made up his mind on what he wanted to implement so that the teachers felt that, at least, they were consulted. He added that he always reminded the teachers that what they were doing was on behalf of the Principal who was the accounting officer in the school. He also mentioned that he allowed the heads of departments to manage their departments without any interference and held consultative meetings with them weekly.

District Schools

In this category, I interviewed five principals as seen in table 3 below.

Table 3: District Schools Principals' Training and Qualifications

Principal	Qualification	Training	Years in service	Years as principal	Type of School	Location	No of Teachers	No of Students
2- F	BEd	KESI 1,2	13	3	Mixed Day	Urban	08	180
7- M	BEd	KESI 1,2	12	9	Mixed Day & Boarding	Rural	17	282
8- M	BEd MEd	KESI 1,2	24	17	Mixed Day	suburban	15	170
9- M	BEd	KESI 1,2	26	7	Mixed Day	Rural	10	200
10- F	BEd, MEd (ongoing PT)	KESI 1,2	15	5	Girls Boarding	Rural	15	272

NB: extracted from table 4.1

BEd Bachelor of Education
F Female
KESI Kenya Education Staff Institute (Training)
M Male
Med Masters of Education
PGD Post Graduate Diploma
PT Part Time

Qualification and training of principals

Like the participants in the provincial schools, each of the principals in this category had a Bachelor's degree in education. One of them (P8) had a Masters degree in education administration and management. Equally, all the principals had attended the KESI training on school management and the occasional workshops organised by the KSSHA. They all acknowledged the importance of the KESI training but noted that it was inadequate in addressing their needs as principals. They also expressed the view that the courses should be offered before one was appointed a principal.

Equally, most of the principals in the district schools stated that the training offered at Bachelor's degree level on school leadership and management was inadequate. One of them observed that: "during the Bachelor's degree programme students simply focus on passing the examinations and the prospects of one becoming a school principal in future is remote and nobody thinks about it at that level" (P7).

As was the case of the national school Principal, P8 also stated that at the beginning of his principalship, he used to threaten teachers to get them do what he wanted:

> For six years before I went for the KESI training, I learned through trial and error and I remember I didn't want to be a school administrator. I wanted to remain a teacher of Mathematics, but I was told, '*go and try*'. When I started I kept telling teachers, '*do this or face the consequences*'. After a while, I realised teachers were not happy, they wanted me to talk to them politely and not threaten them (P8).

Perceptions of democratic school leadership

Like their colleagues interviewed in the provincial schools, the principals in the district schools considered democratic school leadership in terms of stakeholders having the freedom to express their views on issues that went on in the school. According to one principal, the stakeholders "can be free to say what they feel about the school without any inhibition or fear" (P2).

Similarly, P8 pointed out that he practised democratic leadership to a large extent because changed times demand so:

> Yes, I use democratic leadership to a great extent. The reason is - gone are the days we would give school rules to students and tell them to sign that they will abide by the rules. Like now, I have told the teachers, we want to go

> through the school rules and change them and I want the students to have a chance to participate as well. So, the teachers will play a role, the PTA will also play a role then the BoG will ratify (P8).

Another principal (P9) observed that "unlike in the past where the principal had all the powers to make decisions and where the leadership was kind of top-down, in the current scheme we are being told to adopt bottom-up type of approach when making decisions on school matters".

Suitability of democratic school leadership

All the principals in this category except one (P10) stated that they thought democratic school leadership was suitable for their schools even though the majority admitted that they did not always practise it when dealing with students. P10 claimed that she did not find it suitable:

> Well, I don't think it is suitable for this school. Not presently, because these children here come from different backgrounds. So, if you are to offer them democratic rights, then those with more resources will harass the others with less and some will make impossible demands on the school. For example, currently some parents and students have been saying that we should scrap the school uniforms. But, supposing today I have my girls with no uniform, some may come wearing very expensive clothes. This may tempt those who cannot afford such expensive clothes to borrow or even steal in order to look decent and fit with the others in school. The school uniform provides a common outlook to everybody. So the idea of democratic space in such instances can cause a lot of trouble (P10).

She claimed that the students in the school, especially those in Form Four, were so difficult that on many occasions she had to cane them to contain their 'bad behaviour' such as bringing boys into the school to visit them:

> I think the government should not have been so fast in the banning of corporal punishment in schools. It assists so much especially with girls, they fear the cane. So, we still cane them though not openly. It's a real waste of time especially giving punishment such as slashing[3]. She'll do it the whole day and miss classes and will not feel like she has been punished. And, when you send them home, some parents do not take it seriously... Some parents come here and still cane their girls (P10).

[3] Slashing- commonly used in schools to mean cutting of grass

P10 gave an example of a girl who was sent home and told to return with her parents the previous week because she shared a bed with another girl - which was against the rules regulations. The girl stayed at home for the whole week because the parents were too busy to bring her back to school. But she could not be allowed back into school without the parents because, according to the principal, that "would have a bad influence on the other students". When the parents came to the school they complained that the 'mistake' for which the girl was sent home was not worth the punishment. P10 stated that according to the parents, it was normal for young people to share beds and bedding at home. She commented that caning the student would have been effective in solving such cases. She added that it was because of such differences between the teachers' way of looking at issues and the parents' views that she caned the students instead of sending them home. She remarked that the girls were very difficult to deal with at adolescence and "there was no room for democracy for them".

The majority of the principals in district schools mentioned that they did not have strong guidance and counselling departments because of lack of trained staff and so they could not rely on guidance and counselling to handle the students.

Even though some principals in the district schools did not give strong arguments for not practising democratic school leadership with the students as P10 did, they stated that they only practised what most of them referred to

as "partial" democratic school leadership when dealing with the students. For example, P2 argued that:

> I think democracy is good because as a human being at times I would wish to say something even if it is not what others may want to hear. However, in school, democratic school leadership is only suitable to some extent. You see this is a mixed school, you find that these students come from diverse backgrounds and each of them has different problems and ideas, so if I incorporate each of their ideas in my leadership it will be hard to manage the school (P2).

Perceived democratic practices

Election of prefects

Like the principals in the provincial schools, those in the district schools pointed out that they made an effort to be democratic with the students where it was possible. Most of them identified the elections of prefects as one of the democratic practices in their schools although the students who were elected were vetted by the teachers. For example, P9 pointed out that in his school the students who wanted to be prefects applied to the principal, identifying the position they wanted to hold, and then the teachers interviewed the applicants. In the interviews the teachers considered student's communication skills and performance in class work. They gave the interviewees various scenarios, such as how they would handle a situation where students were making noise in class and there was no teacher around.

Despite arguing strongly against treating students democratically, P10 pointed out that she too allowed the students to propose those to be picked as prefects:

> We've been telling the girls to propose to us whom they think is capable to be a prefect and then we come and sit as teachers and say, '*do you think Florence can be a headgirl*?' They say, '*yes, she can because she is*

> *academically good, she is disciplined and she can control the rest of the students*'. Sometimes the students write somebody who is popular to them but we know, we interact with them a lot, through games, in class, we know who can influence others negatively and who can influence positively. They sometimes write those they know will be lenient and will not punish them, so we remove such names (P10).

Class meetings and suggestion boxes

As was seen among the provincial school principals, all principals in district schools also stated that they allowed students to hold class meetings which the principals considered democratic. In the class meetings the students discussed class matters such as performance in class work, cleanliness in the class and noisemaking. The prefects also held regular meetings where they discussed issues such as clubs/societies, sports and discipline among students. One principal (P8) remarked that:

> They also have class meetings on Tuesdays with their class teachers and sometimes the teachers don't attend and we tell the class prefects to chair. Later on they bring their suggestions to us. It can be a complaint on a teacher over syllabus coverage. The prefects also meet on their own under the chairmanship of the Deputy Principal to come up with ways of how best we can run the affairs of the school. Another thing, we have a suggestion box where students are free not to write their names. Most of the complaints I get are about teachers mistreating students, prefects and food. I don't sit on information I investigate and respond to some on assemblies or the notice-board (P8).

Academic families

Principals (P2 and P10) stated that they use what they referred to as 'academic families' to give students a voice in school matters. For example, P10 observed that she had organised the students in Forms Three and Four into 'families' where every teacher had a group of 'children':

> It was a suggestion from one of the teachers that we try and bring these students closer to us so that we encourage them to stay like sisters in one family. I think the teacher went to some school and found it, so when he came and explained to us we saw it was good and we adopted it and we have seen it is helping us. Because the group of Form Fours we have now

> are very indisciplined and they have been right from Form One, but because of the family idea they seem to fear shaming their teacher- parents (P10).

Nevertheless, all principals considered that they dealt with teachers democratically. Most of them mentioned delegating duties to teachers as part of democracy. For example, P2 pointed out that:

> For the teachers, I delegate duties to them. The deputy is in charge of the discipline and he has formed a committee to assist. And then we have class teachers who are in charge of their classes. When I am making the duty roster, I don't just post the names; I ask each of them '*which week are you comfortable to be on duty?*' Some will tell me, I am not comfortable in week one because I will be taking my child to school and such kind of a thing. So, they feel they are part and parcel of the decision making in the school (P2)

Counselling and corporal punishment

The majority of the principals viewed counselling as an important element of democratic school leadership. However, in the absence of qualified teachers they resorted to corporal punishment. For example, P2 stated that because there were not many teachers trained in guidance and counselling, she used corporal punishment "to control" the students, arguing that because the parents used the same at home, it needed to be used in the schools as well. Thus, there was an attempt to bring out the disparity between the government's policies and what goes on in the society and justify that the school should perpetuate the societal norms.

Another principal (P8) used Christianity to justify his use of corporal punishment:

> As a Christian I find it difficult to advocate for full democratic management with the students because they can get spoilt. The Bible says, '*spare the rod, and spoil the child*'. You see, some of these practices that may not be seen as democratic like caning students are also a symbol of authority for the teacher on duty. Even the Bible says in Romans 10 that '*respect those who*

> *are in authority, because authority comes from God and if the person in authority punishes you accept it'* (P8).

P8 also claimed that many of the students preferred to be caned rather than be given other forms of punishment such as being sent home. He considered that democratic because it was the students' preference. He insisted that it was parents' preference as well:

> Some parents during annual general meeting or education days come and whisper to some of the teachers, '*please take care of my boy here. I am allowing you to cane him if he misbehaves'*. I have also seen a situation where a student says, '*I don't want manual work- cane me instead then I go to class'*. So, in that case it is democracy of some sort because you are doing what the student wants (P8).

Another principal (P9) argued that as much as he would prefer other ways of dealing with indiscipline among students, such as guidance and counselling, it was only applicable in some schools such as his previous school (a national school):

> I would say that the banning of caning in schools has had some negative effects on school discipline. Ok, I've dealt with students for this long and most students who are taken through guidance and counselling become better people than those controlled by the cane. By looking at my former school *** girls you find that when the students made a mistake, they would come forward and say '*excuse me sir or madam I have made this mistake and I am sorry'*, so it is very easy for a teacher to talk to them. But you come to this school; the background of these kids is such that the manner of control at home is by the 'stick', so making that break-through by talking to them is hard (P9).

Staff meetings and briefings

All the principals pointed out that they held staff meetings and briefings to update the teachers on the goings-on in the schools. For example, P2 stated that she briefed teachers during tea breaks and lunch breaks whenever she had something new to tell teachers and also gave them opportunity to air their views on various matters such as teaching load and co-curricular activities. She observed that more formal briefings took place every two weeks and staff

meetings were held at the beginning and end of the term. She added that staff meetings could also be held at any other time when there were emergencies such as unrest by students over something. She also allowed teachers to choose to be patrons of clubs and societies such as Young Christian Union (YCU), Catholic Students Association (CSA) and other co-curricular activities in the school.

She observed that when teachers were part of the decision-making, "it makes them more committed to the decisions and they feel more ownership of them" (P2). According to P7, it "makes teachers feel part and parcel of the school and also makes it easy implementing certain policies that have been decided by the teachers themselves".

Committees

Most principals explained that they encouraged teachers to put themselves forward for membership of committees in order to contribute to school management. For example, P7 observed that he used committees of teachers to handle different issues in the school. The disciplinary committee headed by the Deputy Principal, and which included all heads of department handled serious discipline cases that could not be handled adequately by the teacher on duty such as theft, fighting and bullying. These committees were formed by the teachers in staff meetings:

> We formed the disciplinary committee when I came to this school because there were a lot of indiscipline cases. It is made up of the Deputy Principal who is the head, and the heads of department. I usually tell them, '*the best thing you can do is finishing these cases of indiscipline at your level because when they reach my level I give stricter measures*', so the best way to assist the students is by finishing it at the committee level. They have done very well. Cases of suspensions and students wasting time doing punishment have reduced. We have other committees such as games committee

> guidance and counselling committee. We form them during staff meetings. Some people volunteer to join whilst in some cases it depends on one's area of specialisation (P7).

P7 remarked that when he came to the current school there were problems of teachers rebelling against the previous principal because they were completely excluded from running of the school but he changed that and started involving the teachers in the management of the school.

School structure

Another principal (P8) pointed out that school structures provided opportunities for teachers to experience a range of issues, for example, the HoD had the powers to manage the department, thus s/he could order for books, check that all the teachers had their schemes of work and lesson plans. This principal stated that he briefed the teachers on any matters that arose in the school which he felt they should know e.g. communication from the TSC, or from the BoG:

> Firstly, we have heads of department. Like the head of languages is having five to six teachers under him and I told him that; '*it is like your school and you are the boss, be in full control*'. Things concerning the departments like purchasing new books, they have to agree on the books they want. The head of department just facilitates. Now they are preparing schemes of work. They meet on their own, the HoD chairs the meeting and the rest contribute on how best they can prepare schemes of work, how best they can prepare lesson plans and what they want for the department. We encourage them to make suggestions freely and consult (P8).

P8 asserted that whenever there were seminars for the heads of department organized by KSSHA he gave the HoDs a chance to nominate one of them to attend. And, when there were seminars for other teachers who were not HoDs, then he gave the departments concerned chances to propose one of them to attend - processes that he considered democratic.

Another principal (P10) pointed out that she was very open with the teachers and spent much of her 'free' time in the staffroom with the teachers:

> I am very free with the teachers. Most of the times when I am free I sit with them in the staffroom and if they have anything, they want me to do they are free to tell me. We have staff meetings as formalities because in most cases we have discussed everything informally. Then we also have departments like guidance and counselling, the deputy is in charge of discipline. We have also divided forms three and four students into what we call families, so that each and every teacher has a group of four to five students and they actually deal with the girls directly at personal level whenever the girls have a problem (P10).

Summary

Training and experience of principals

From the three categories of schools, the principals' views suggest that the Bachelor's degree training they received at the university was not adequate for them to serve effectively as principals in the light of the changing school leadership demands. The training at the university, they noted, was more for passing the exams at the university. Equally, at the university, the idea of becoming a principal in future was remote and therefore many trainee teachers did not think much about the relevance of the courses at the time. The training that the principals got at KESI, though brief, was more relevant but it was not adequate. It covered topics on public relations, human resource management, but had more emphasis on financial management which the government considered critical in the running of the schools. In essence, the training did not prepare the principals adequately for the implementation of democratic school leadership in their schools. Whilst I had expected that the principals who attended the KESI training would perceive their practices in schools as more democratic, it turned out that P1 who had

not attended any KESI training considered her leadership practices as very democratic. This, it appeared, was rooted in the school culture and traditions which seemed to significantly influence the operations in the school.

Perceptions of democratic school leadership

Most of the principals viewed democratic school leadership in terms of students', teachers' and parents' participation in decision-making and contributions to issues that went on in the school. There were also elements of social justice and equity, such as helping the students from poor background with food and clothes (P1, P3, P5 and P8).

The majority of principals interviewed found democratic school leadership suitable for their schools, however, all of them except one (P1) added 'BUT...'to the suitability. For most of them, it was only suitable for the teachers but only to an extent for the students. P10 did not find it suitable for the students whilst P12 did not find it suitable for the parents. Therefore, the principals appeared to 'construct' their own ways of 'practising democracy' depending on their specific school contexts but drawing from general principles of democracy and the local culture. Some of them (who had been teachers in national schools) considered that 'real' democracy was only applicable in certain national schools because of the long established traditions in those schools.

Most principals considered the students' socio-economic backgrounds as a justification for not using democratic school leadership, arguing that the

students from the poor neighbourhood were very difficult to deal with. The principals also felt that African culture provided for specific ways of dealing with young people, such as caning, whenever they made 'serious mistakes' and the same methods of discipline used at home should be applied in schools.

Students' involvement in school leadership

The election of the prefects was considered by the principals as the ultimate illustration of being democratic with students. This was despite the fact that in all the schools, the teachers vetted and approved the final list of the prefects after the proposals from the students. This was because, as one of the principals pointed out, in previous years the prefects were strictly selected by the teachers without any proposals from the students, thus the idea of the students proposing the names was seen as democratic.

Counselling of students was also perceived as important in promoting democracy for the students. The principals observed that before the ban on corporal punishment counselling was not actively practised in schools

Teachers involvement in school leadership

The issue of including the teachers in departmental budgeting also featured in almost all schools as sign of democratic school leadership. This was because, as some principals argued, it was an area that was originally the domain of the principals only. Equally, delegation of duties and teachers

performing their normal duties was also considered as being democratic, in the sense that the principals did not interfere with the way the teachers did their work - implying that in the 'old days' interference was normal.

Some principals also perceived democracy as spending more time with the teachers in the staffroom and having lunch and tea break together with them.

Other emerging issues

Most principals talked about the school leadership that was practised 'earlier' when the principal was the sole decision maker and all-knowing, but which had since changed. They seemed to link this change to the banning of corporal punishment in 2001. They, therefore, closely associated the requirement by the government that they adopt democratic school leadership to the banning of caning. Thus, as much as many of them pointed out that they still used caning in school, the reduction in doing so was perceived as an improvement on their democratic practices.

The principals also mentioned that there were no clear government guidelines about how they were supposed to practise democratic school leadership. Whilst some considered the lack of guidelines acceptable (so that they find what is suitable for each school), others thought it was more confusing. This, therefore, required leadership skills to help spearhead the changes in their respective schools. Many also criticised the government for contradictions and a lack of clarity about what it expected the principals to do. That is, the government did not deal democratically with the principals.

It also emerged that religion was used to promote democracy in schools, but in some circumstances it was used to justify practices that could be considered undemocratic. In the former, religion was used to teach humility and obedience, especially the schools that had strong links with churches as expressed by P1 (African Inland Church-AIC), P10 (Catholic Church), P4 (Catholic Church), P6 (AIC), P11 (Catholic Church). However, in other schools (as argued by P8), the principal used the Bible to justify practices such as caning.

Selected Case Schools

Based on the foregoing summary of the interviews, I selected and sought access from two principals (P1 and P10) in whose schools I conducted in-depth study. I selected P1 because she considered her leadership practices very democratic. The school appeared to have well organised structures and had developed a culture and traditions over time that determined operations and practices. It admitted students from all over the country and, therefore, had students from diverse cultures. I needed to find out if the students and the teachers had similar views about the school as the principal. I also wanted to observe the operations and practices in the school and compare these with the views expressed by the principal.

I selected P10 because in her perception, democratic leadership was not suitable for her school. She claimed that she found girls very difficult to deal with as well as some parents, and if she applied democratic school leadership

then she was bound to fail as a principal. She was the only principal who stated that democratic school leadership was not suitable for her school. Equally, her perception about how to maintain discipline among the girls was in direct contrast to P1 who also headed a girls' school. Whilst P1 argued that the girls were easy to deal with, P10 considered girls difficult to deal with. Because the principals were expected by the government to implement the same policies on democratic school leadership, it was important to establish the factors that brought about the two divergent views. I explore the issues summarised above in more detail in Chapters five, six and seven, starting with Case One School which I discuss in the next chapter.

CHAPTER FIVE: CASE ONE SCHOOL

Introduction

In this chapter I discuss Case One School context including the facilities, access and the daily operations of the school. The chapter also includes the data collection process using interviews, focus group discussions, observations and informal conversations. It also contains an analysis of the data which are grouped into various themes derived from the literature and from the data. Finally, I provide a summary of the main issues discussed in the chapter.

The Case Context

Introduction

This is a national boarding girls' school which, during the colonial times, only educated white students. After Kenya got its independence from the British colonial rule in 1964, it changed into a 'high cost school'. There were only three such girls' schools in the country and the school fees paid were higher than in 'ordinary' schools making it an elite school, an image it still has. Currently, the school has over 70 teachers and about 800 students admitted from every district in Kenya regardless of their economic background. Like all the other national schools in Kenya, it admits only students who excel in Kenya Certificate of Primary Education (KCPE).

Facilities

Table 4: Resources/facilities in Case One School (source: management booklet 2005)

Academic	Boarding	Games/ Sports	Recreational/ meeting facilities	Others Facilities/ resources
18 classrooms 5 science laboratories 1 computer laboratories 2 music rooms with pianos & other instruments 2 French language rooms 2 arts rooms 3 home science rooms 1 library	8 dormitories 3 dining halls for students 1 dining hall for teachers 1 tea room for teachers	1 athletics track 1 soccer pitch 2 hockey pitches 2 netball pitches 4 volleyball pitches 2 basketball courts 4 lawn tennis courts 2 badminton courts 2 table tennis tables 1 gymnasium 1 swimming pool	1. hall/theatre 1 chapel 2 staffrooms 1 board room 1 TV room for students 1 canteen 1 restaurant	sanatorium dairy farm

Access

In Phase One of this study, I interviewed the Principal who agreed that the following term (January 08 - March 08), I could conduct interviews with the teachers, hold focus group discussions with students and generally observe activities in the school. Subsequently, when I reported to the school, the Principal introduced me to the Deputy Principal who took me to both staffrooms and introduced me to the teachers. Later in the week, I attended a school assembly and was introduced to the students. I was permitted to use the staffrooms and identify teachers willing to be interviewed. I also met the Director of Studies whose consent I needed before arranging with individual teachers to attend and observe their lessons, and before holding focus group discussions with the students. The Director of Studies in turn agreed to be interviewed as well. He also introduced me to the Chaplain who was in

charge of students' affairs in the school. Because the students were 'boarders' it would be difficult to get consent from their parents before holding focus group discussions, I got consent from the Chaplain who was the overall head of students welfare including boarding.

Daily operations of the school

There were three teachers on duty each week, two of whom lived on the school compound. The teacher who lived outside the school compound arrived in the morning and took the lead in the school operations such as school assemblies, cleanliness, and students' meals from 8am-2pm, and then another teacher took over from 2pm – 6pm. The last teacher on duty stayed in the staffroom until 10pm by which time all students were expected to be in their dormitories. This teacher remained in charge until the following morning. When leaving the staffroom at 10pm, the teacher wrote a brief report in the 'black book' on the events of the day. The book was forwarded to the Deputy Principal at the end of the week. There were security officers at each of the two gates of the school and others patrolling within the compound. Practically, the three teachers on duty worked in collaboration with all the other teachers.

Data Collection

Interviews

I conducted interviews with eight teachers and held a follow-up interview with the Principal. My sample included representation from each of the three management tiers in the school - senior, middle and junior. In the senior management I interviewed the Principal, Deputy Principal, Director of Studies and the Chaplain. In the middle-level which included the heads of department and subject, I interviewed two teachers. Among the other teachers which comprised ordinary classroom teachers, some who were holding positions of responsibility such as being in charge of a specific sport, I interviewed three teachers. I conducted the interviews with the senior management teachers in their offices while the rest of the interviews were conducted in the school boardroom. Each of the interviews lasted between 45 minutes to one hour and was audio-recorded with the consent of the teachers.

As discussed in Chapter three, apart from the interviews, I also had informal conversations with the same teachers from time to time over different issues in the school. I noted down in my research journal the information I considered relevant from the informal conversations soon after the talks. I have included the informal discussions in my analysis.

Focus group discussions

The focus group discussions were held with the students in Forms Two (15yrs), Three (16 yrs), Four (17 yrs) and the prefects from Forms Two, Three

and Four. The Form One students had just reported to school for the first time and so I did not include them. I identified the students with the help of the teachers on duty. I went with the teacher to the classrooms and asked students to volunteer for the discussions, three from every class in the same year. Each of the focus groups discussions had between 12-16 students and were conducted after classes (4pm-5pm) in a free study room attached to the library. On each of the focus group discussion days, the teacher on duty informed the games teacher that I would be meeting some students. The discussions lasted between 45 minutes to one hour and were audio-recorded after getting verbal consent from the students.

Observations

Observations focused on specific areas of the school such as the staffroom, school assemblies and classrooms, as well as isolated functions including church services, games and the school cultural day. I spent most of the time 'hanging around' in the staffrooms. Each staffroom had a television, telephone and a computer. There were also various notice-boards carrying posters and notices, for example, 'profile of an effective HOD', 'performance indicators of a working HOD', 'job description of a HOD', and 'the mandate of departmental headship' from the Teachers Service Commission. The Director of Studies later mentioned that the notices were meant for quick references to facilitate teachers' work.

Analysis of the data

As discussed in Chapter three, whilst some of my themes were derived from the literature, others were derived from the data. The sub-themes were all derived from the data. The themes were:

- Perceptions of democratic school leadership.
- Perceived democratic practices in the school.
- Creating opportunities for open dialogue among staff and students.
- Encouraging students' and teachers' voices in decision-making in the schools.
- Establishing arenas for collaboration and negotiations between students and staff.
- Enhancing equity and social justice for all in the school.
- Creating an ethic of care and a concern for everybody in the school.

The extracts from the interviews and focus group discussions were coded based on the Case School and the order in which the interviews and focus group discussions were conducted. For example, C1-T1 means Case One interview one and C1-FGD1 is Case One focus group discussions one.

Perceptions of democratic school leadership

The majority of teachers in Case One School perceived democracy as a situation where everybody in a school had opportunity to participate in decision-making on issues that affect them and where the will of the majority was respected. They contrasted this to situations where decisions were

imposed on the people without much consultation. The teachers pointed out that dialogue was a major component of democracy.

Views on whether there was democratic leadership in the school varied. Whilst three out of the eight teachers interviewed believed that the leadership practices in the school were democratic, the others viewed it as "partial democracy". One teacher in the latter group stated that in certain circumstances, especially when dealing with students, the practices were not always democratic:

> Our school is not fully democratic. We have partial democracy because we still have what I can call undemocratic practices in some cases, like now students are allowed to elect the prefects. But we are supposed to endorse whoever they have elected. We sometimes reject some of the names of the students who are elected and so it is not full democracy (junior teacher: C1-T2).

One senior teacher remarked that even if the practices in the school were not fully democratic, the school administration was "growing and trying to adapt to the changing times because the students belong to a generation that wants to express themselves and we cannot stop them" (senior teacher: C1-T7).

Those who supported 'partial democracy' argued that if the school was fully democratic then the students might make some demands that would not conform to the expectations of the school, for example, "the students may demand to wake up at 7 am and not 5 am as is the case now, and that will not give them enough time to prepare for morning studies" (junior teacher: C1-T1). Similar arguments were advanced by some principals (P2 and P10) in Phase One.

Most of the teachers also claimed that the kind of students they had in the school came from affluent backgrounds where they had so much freedom that if similar freedom was extended to them in school then they (students) would take advantage and make what one of the teacher referred to as "unnecessary demands" (middle-level teacher: C1-T3). This claim suggests that some of the teachers did not seem to trust the students to make responsible judgements on the rights that they (students) could have within the school.

The majority of students in the focus group discussions, like the teachers, also perceived democracy to be respect of individual rights and allowing people to express their opinions over issues that affect them without any prohibition. One student stated that democratic school leadership "is a situation where the whole school community has a say in what goes on in the school from the teachers, students and the subordinate staff" (Student: C1-FCD 2). However, they had contrasting views on whether democratic school leadership was practised in the school. Whilst a few students argued that the practices in the school were democratic, most of them claimed that they (practices) were not.

Perceived democratic practices in the school

Election of prefects

The teachers and most students identified the election of prefects as an illustration of democratic practices in the school even though those who were elected were vetted by the teachers. However, a few students felt that the process of selecting the prefects was not democratic because the teachers sometimes changed the names that the students had proposed: " I don't think our school is democratically run because even if we make our choices of prefects the teachers still go and change it" (Student: C1-FGD3).

Apart from the election of prefects, the other practices teachers and students perceived as democratic in the school included the students' participation in changing the daily school routine. This was after the students had rejected the one made by the teachers because they (students) wanted three days for sports and games and not two as was provided by the teachers. Equally, the students wanted to wake up earlier (5.00 am) than had been proposed by the teachers (5.30 am):

> When we came up with a school routine and presented to the students, they said 'no'. So, we discussed and agreed that we let them make it. And believe me; what they came up with is so good that we are now trying to see how we can adopt it. So, I feel that we have actually gone a step higher than before when it comes to involving students in making decisions (senior teacher: C1-T5).

One student explained that:

> Our class prefects asked for the views of the students in the class then we agreed as a class what we wanted the school routine to be like. The prefects then met and discussed our views. Before then, the teachers had come up with a school routine which they brought to us but we rejected it. After we rejected it we were given the mandate to make the changes that we wanted. And we did that. In the one they made, they wanted us to wake up at 5.30 but we want to wake up at 5am so that we have enough time for preparation.

> We also wanted games to be on Monday, Wednesday and Friday and not Thursday and Friday only as they had suggested (Student C1-FGD2).

Religious matters

On religious matters, the Chaplain claimed that their practices were democratic because the students were free to join any religious group in the school including Catholic, Seventh Day Adventist, Protestants and Muslims. She maintained that even though she had a chapel committee comprising teachers nominated by the rest of the staff, the committee did not implement any operations without consulting the chapel prefect. The latter also had a team of students appointed by the chapel committee whom she (the chapel prefect) consulted first before giving feedback to the teachers' chapel committee.

The Chaplain pointed out that the school had conducted a simple study to get students' views about the services in the chapel with an intention to make the services suit the students. She added that the findings were used to implement changes in the way the services in the chapel were conducted (ref. Appendix one). However, in the focus group discussions a few students criticised the way the chapel services were conducted. For example, one student lamented that:

> I think we sometimes need to break from the tradition in this school. We have so much tradition that even if you try to bring something new, after a short while we just get back to the old way of doing things. For example, in the chapel we cannot try something new in the way the services are conducted. Let's say the preaching and songs; we are youth and we need a kind of hip-hop type of songs, not those ones that make you feel like somebody has died. We should try and embrace the current trends of things that the youth like (prefect: FGD4).

In my observation during the induction programme for the new students, I noted that the Chaplain paid attention only to Christian services. She was explaining to the new students about the operations of the chapel committee, the values of being God fearing and the value of Jesus in the life of a Christian. She informed the students that all new students were expected to come with a hymn book and a Bible. She also reminded them that Church services, conducted every Sunday at 8.30-10am, were compulsory except for Muslims, but that the Church assembly on Wednesday morning was compulsory for all students regardless of their religious affiliation. As she was explaining all these services, there were about 10 students who were Muslims and were wearing veils but she never paid attention to them. I also observed that there were no provisions for students who were neither Christians nor Muslims in the school.

The assertion by the Chaplain that all students were expected to attend Christian services on Wednesday raises a question about religious minorities and her claim about equality. In fact, one Muslim student criticised the teachers for sometimes behaving as if all the students in the school were Christians:

> I think the issue of ignoring non Christian students should be taken into consideration because I don't get a chance to pray at a suitable place. We are getting a rough time on religious issues. I know as Muslims we can pray anywhere, but in our religion there is that standard of cleanliness and holiness which cannot be found anywhere except at the mosque because you don't enter with shoes... Right now Muslims don't have a prayer room in the school because there was a fight between two Muslim girls in the prayer room and so the prayer room was closed. But I think it is not fair because there is a day two Christian girls fought in the TV room but the TV room was not closed. We are not even allowed to go for Muslim functions held out of the school compound yet Christian Union members go for their rallies (student: C1-FGD1).

In an informal conversation with the Chaplain, she explained that the prayer room for the Muslim students was closed down because there was a conflict between Sunni and Shiite groups. She stated that the school had invited Imams from the different groups to talk to the students but the school was yet to decide on the way forward.

As discussed earlier in Chapter Four (see '*national school*'), in my interview with the Principal, she emphasised that she uses religion to get the students to have good conduct. Equally, in the school, there was a notice-board where Biblical quotes were placed for both the students and the teachers each week. For example, for week six the quote was "Delight in the Lord and he will fulfil your Hearts Desire" Psalms 37:4. There were no equivalent quotations for the Muslim students.

The majority of the teachers and some students stated that the students were occasionally consulted on the types of meals they wanted to eat. However, some students expressed the view that their school was not democratic enough. One student remarked that: "somebody may want to apply chemicals on her hair but they are not allowed to by the school yet it is good for us" (student: C1-FGD3).

Teachers' participation in decision-making

The majority of the teachers observed that the Principal consulted them regularly before making decisions on matters such as setting targets for teachers and students and on the budget:

> You know when people are allowed to give their views which are then implemented, they kind of own it and they support it, unlike when they are just told, *'This is what I have decided'*. In our school if something comes up such as an invitation for joint sports, the Principal will bring it to the staffroom, *'members, how do you feel? What are your suggestions?'* And by the end of that discussion you feel that the ideas are from us. I remember last year there was the issue of the senior management setting targets for each subject but later they changed and gave us the chance to set our own targets of what we expected the students to get in our subjects by the end of the year. There is a lot of consultation and the environment is such that you feel compelled to put in more effort (middle level teacher: C1-T4).

This group of teachers, therefore, felt that leadership was well negotiated in their school because there were many positions of leadership in the school that were shared out to all.

As already discussed in Chapter four (see *'national school'*), the Principal pointed out that she involved the teachers in deciding many of the school matters, particularly finances which she considered "very sensitive". She noted that the budget was discussed by the departments and senior management before it was finally presented to the PTA and BoG.

Management structure

The Director of Studies emphasised that democratic practices in the school were enhanced by the school management structure (see fig 3) which made clear the roles of each teacher and how they contributed to the decision making in the school. He explained that whenever an issue came up, for example, in accommodation and boarding, then everybody in the school knew the person to approach - Senior HoD boarding, who in turn would consult with the teachers in charge of dormitories. He stressed that this helped avoid duplication of duties or clashes of roles.

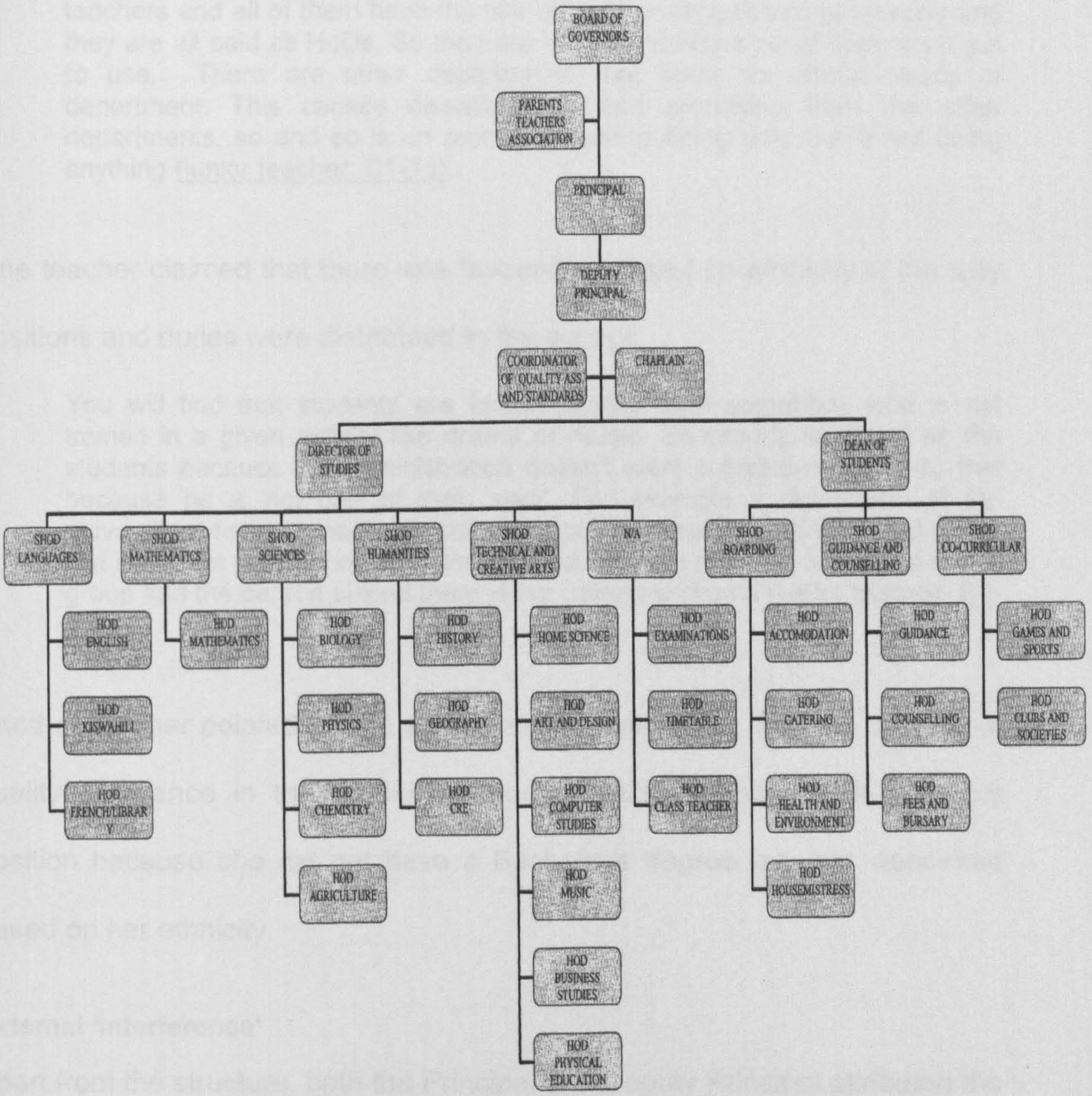

Figure 3: Case One School management structure (Source - School management document, 2005 edition)

A few teachers, however, insisted that leadership was not well negotiated and shared in the school, pointing out that there were cases where departments had more senior teachers than they needed:

> Leadership in ***** Girls is not evenly shared. You will find like in one department we have all the members of the department are designated heads of department[4]. Let me give an example of Geography, which has five

[4] In Kenya each school should have one HoD for each subject. But there are cases where teachers are promoted to positions of HoD but they may use political influence to remain in the same school. Sometimes teachers are appointed by the principal to act in a position such as HoD and the principal then makes a recommendation to the TSC for the teacher to be confirmed in the position.

> teachers and all of them have the title of head of department-geography and they are all paid as HoDs. So they are holding positions which they don't put to use. There are other departments that have no official heads of department. This causes dissatisfaction and grumbling from the other departments, so and so is on promotion and is being paid but is not doing anything (junior teacher: C1-T1).

One teacher claimed that there was favouritism based on ethnicity in the way positions and duties were distributed in the school:

> You will find that students are forced to deal with somebody who is not trained in a given activity like drama or music. Somebody is forced on the students because the administration doesn't want a professional to do that because he is not one of their 'own'. For example, I did drama at the university, when I came to this school I thought I would train drama and plays. But I was not put in charge of drama because I am not from a specific ethnic group and the person placed there is not trained in drama (junior teacher: C1-T2).

Another teacher pointed out, in an informal conversation, that the director of quality assurance in the school was not qualified to hold such a senior position because she did not have a Bachelor's degree but was appointed based on her ethnicity.

External 'interference'

Apart from the structure, both the Principal and Deputy Principal attributed the democratic practices in the school to what the Principal referred to as "very little interference from the PTA, BoG and the government" in the management of the school. For example, in the school structure (fig 3) some positions such as Coordinator of Quality Assurance and Standards, Chaplain and Dean of Students were internal appointments and not recognised by the TSC[5], but accepted by the government "which is not the case in some other schools" (Deputy Principal: C1-T8). Similar sentiments were expressed by some

[5] In Kenya, various positions in secondary schools are created by the TSC which appoints teachers into them, but a few schools can create more internal positions and appoint teachers who are paid by the TSC to hold them.

Principals (P5 and P12) in Phase One of the study who claimed that the government treated some schools more favourably than others.

In the interviews, the teachers confirmed that "external interference" was minimal in the school. Instead, they got a lot of support and motivation from the PTA and the BoG:

> The BoG and PTA have come up with some incentives, like when you work so hard and you have 'As' in your subject you get financial reward. When I came to this school there was no 'A' in Physics. The best grade was a 'B'- and very many 'Ds'. Then the BoG and PTA began to look into how we could improve. They begun by motivating students, if a student got an 'A', that student would be rewarded. The same applies to the teachers. I'm telling you the 'As' have become uncountable. And then there is the reward for all the teachers. The other year they sponsored a holiday trip for us to Dares-salaam and last year we went to Mombasa (junior teacher, C1-T2).

'Undemocratic' practices

Despite the majority of the teachers viewing the practices in the school as democratic a few claimed that there were practices in the school that were undemocratic such as promotions of teachers:

> I finished the same year with my boss but what I want to tell you is that promotion here is very undemocratic and discriminative that is why you find some of us are complaining. For example, I have never held any positions like HoD since I came here. I have only been a patron of a club which has no financial value (junior teacher: C1-T2).

In an informal conversation with this teacher (C1-T2), he lamented that there was ethnic bias in the promotion of teachers in the school with the Principal favouring teachers from her ethnic community. He insisted that despite being a national school, some teachers were being perceived as "outsiders" because they did not come from the local ethnic community, and the situation had been heightened by the ethno-political violence in the country at the time.

Other teachers who were not from the local ethnic community also expressed being considered as "outsiders" by their colleagues but, they did not link that to promotion because, according to them, there were teachers from other ethnic communities who had also been promoted to senior positions in the school.

Opportunities for open dialogues among staff

The teachers stated that there were various committees in the school responsible for different duties in the school which met regularly and this provided them with opportunities for dialogue among themselves. Most of the deliberations were then presented to the general staff meetings. The committees included the senior management, guidance and counselling, boarding and accommodation, welfare, games and sports committees and so on. Each academic department met and nominated members to each committee and each committee was chaired by a senior HoD, except for the disciplinary committee which is chaired by the Deputy Principal and the senior management committee chaired by the Principal.

In my interview with the Deputy Principal, she explained that through these committees, teachers were able to work with one another on different issues such as boarding and accommodation, students' meals, sports and games and these promoted dialogue among staff from different academic departments. Apart from these committee meetings, the school had two officially scheduled staff meetings, one at the beginning of the term and another at the end of the term. However, within the term, there were "special

staff meetings that were held to address specific matters that would arise such as evaluating national examination results in Term One or discussing a visit by school inspectors" (junior teacher: C1-T1).

Apart from the staff meetings, the teachers stated that there were few official meetings between them and the Principal:

> We have senior teachers in every department and the meetings are chaired by one of the senior teachers. Unless the Principal is invited, she does not attend these meetings because the senior HoD will brief her after the meeting. For staff meetings, it depends on how situations demand but we normally have staff meetings at least two times, at the beginning and end of the term. But, within the term we can have situations that demand for special staff meetings. Like when there is confirmation of the prefects after the three months' probation period, the teachers must meet (middle level teacher: C1-T3).

A few junior teachers interviewed stated that they hardly met the Principal informally apart from the occasional briefings during tea breaks:

> Well, the number of times I've met her in church are more than the number of times I've met her at other times. We don't meet frequently with the Principal. She might just come over during tea break and say hello and then maybe if you have a personal issue like you want your child to find a place in the school, then you follow her to the office. But generally *** Girls being what it is, I think there are too many people who come to see her (junior teacher: C1-T1).

According to another junior teacher, not all the teachers had the 'privilege' to hold informal consultations with the Principal:

> Informal consultations with the Principal are common but not for all the teachers. It is always among the chosen few, who are close to the Principal. Some of us are not free to see her because the warmth you receive is not the same with that received by the inner circle. Even when the Principal comes to the staffroom, she only consults with the privileged group and not with all the teachers unless she wants to brief the staff members on something (junior teacher: C1-T2).

However, this view of "the chosen few" was not shared by all the junior teachers interviewed. One junior teacher remarked that:

> The Principal is all over; she has no boundary and always comes for tea during tea-break if she is not busy. She is very friendly. But again, the only time a teacher would go to her office is when a teacher wants permission to be away for awhile. For many other issues one can see the HoD or the Deputy Principal (junior teacher: C1-T6).

The senior teachers, on the other hand, mentioned that they frequently met the Principal informally either to consult her on specific matters relating to their duties or just to chat whenever the Principal had free time. Equally, they mentioned that the Principal consulted them on a regular basis to seek clarification on matters relating to their positions such as on sports, boarding and societies, to keep up to date with activities going on in various departments.

In my observations, I noted that the teachers interacted freely. The school provided free tea and lunch for teachers and during tea breaks, those from the Sciences and Mathematics staffroom came to the Humanities and Languages staffroom to take tea. I was informed that this was because a lot of the tea break briefings from the teachers, by the Principal and the Deputy Principal took place in the Humanities and Languages staffroom which was considered the main staffroom.

Student voice in decision-making.

From the interviews and focus group discussion, it emerged that the students' contribution to decision-making in the school was through class meetings, house meetings, prefects' meetings and parents/students meetings.

Class and house meetings

In the class meetings, normally held on Tuesday morning, the students discussed matters such as "how teachers treat students in class, the teachers who missed lessons, the performance of the class in tests compared to the other classes, the cleanliness of the class and noise-making in the class" (junior teacher C1-T6). The class meetings were chaired by the class teachers but, if a class teacher was unable to attend, the class prefect chaired the meeting and the issues discussed were submitted to the class teacher:

> Yeah, we have class meetings every Tuesday morning from 7.30 - 8.00 and the class teacher attends but if she cannot make it then she will inform the class in advance so that the class prefect can chair the meeting. They discuss issues that affect their class and the class teacher is expected to address the issues. If there is any issue that the class teacher cannot handle then s/he will take it to the next step...And students usually discuss many issues such as how the teachers handle them in class, those who miss lessons, the performance of the class, cleanliness, etc. If these matters are handed over to the Deputy Principal in most cases the students get the feedback from the class teacher in the next class meeting. If it is urgent then the class teacher can always inform the class prefect. If it can benefit the whole school, like students who have lost some items in the class, it is announced on the school assembly (junior teacher: C1-T6).

A student explained that sometimes they discussed issues such as teachers making comments that hurt students:

> In class meetings on Tuesdays we also present our views on how teachers treat us. For example, there are times when a teacher is in class and makes a comment that can hurt a student. Like today a teacher made a comment that when your parents are together then a student has no excuse for not passing exams because the parents are together and so you are comfortable. I think that was insensitive because there is a friend of mine in the class and I know her parents are separated. So, these kinds of comments hurt her and I also felt bad for her. I will present that in our class meeting so that it is taken to the teachers and they are told to avoid such comments (student: C1-FGD3).

In the house meetings the issues discussed included cleanliness and noise making in the dormitories. The meetings were chaired by house teachers but,

as in class meetings, when the teacher was unable to attend, the house prefect chaired the meeting:

> We usually have house meetings where we give the students opportunities to air their views on house cleaning, noise making, and any other issues that the they may raise. And there are several issues that students raise, for example, if a house prefect has given a punishment and a students feels it is not fair in comparison to the mistake made then the student will bring it up in the house meeting (prefect: C1-FGD4).

Prefects meetings

The prefects held their meetings every Sunday to discuss students' issues and their (prefects') welfare which were then forwarded to the teachers:

> There are various issues we discus such as the items the students want to be sold in the canteen. And, there was sometime when a BoG official gave us some money. We asked the students how they wanted the money to be spent and they decided that they wanted to buy a DVD player. We discussed and presented it to the Deputy Principal and the DVD player was bought (Student: C1-FGD4).

According to one senior teacher, the school management structure (fig 3) facilitated student voice in the decision-making process:

> What we are doing with the whole prefect body now is to assign a prefect into every office that is created. Like now, I have a prefect who is in charge of academics who works with class prefects, and then in boarding there is a prefect who is the overall head of boarding and so every teacher in office has a prefect to work with in that office. For example, in games if students need some equipment such as hockey sticks then there is a prefect they present that to who will meet her team and present to the head of department in games who will also discuss with his or her team (senior teacher: C1-T5).

In a follow-up interview with the Principal she explained that if she had a "sensitive" matter in the school involving students then she held a *baraza* to discuss it with the students and give them a chance to air their views. She gave an example of the Form Three students who "had many cases of indiscipline and were not doing well in Continuous Assessment Tests (CATs)". She stated that she held a *baraza* with them where they expressed

their concerns starting with their complaints about some teachers whom they accused of not treating them well. She then discussed their (students) weaknesses in the areas of indiscipline and in CATs, which they promised to improve on. The principal noted that since then the Form Three students have improved in both discipline and academic performance.

Taking students views into consideration

Most students claimed that there were instances when teachers did not take their views into consideration when making decisions, for example, in the running of the canteen where students felt they should have more control over the items that were sold there. They also stated that they wanted chewing gums sold in the canteen.

But, in an informal conversation, one teacher explained to me that they had to be strict about the sale of items such as biscuits and sweets in the canteen for medical reasons - they could cause teeth problems for students.

All students also felt that they should be allowed to 'treat' their hair with chemicals relaxers and needed hot water for taking showers in the morning:

> On grooming, I think the school is too strict in the way we are supposed to treat our hair. I think we should be allowed to use chemicals on our hair. Like me I come from the coast[6], it's very difficult to keep this African type of hair. So when you come here, it's like a burden, it's a tormenting experience to us (student: C1-FGD3).

> Ok, my problem is hot water. We don't have hot water for shower. Sometimes it is very cold to bathe with that cold water. Heaters can be expensive alright but what about the instant heaters on the showers? That is

[6] Most people who live in the coastal region of Kenya are of Arab descent and have different type of hair from the rest of the Kenyans.

> cheap and I'm sure the school can afford. We keep telling them but they don't tell us anything (student: C1- FGD1).

When I discussed this with the Deputy Principal in an informal conversation, she agreed that students should be allowed to apply chemical relaxers on their hair, but stated that when she presented the issue to the teachers in a staff meeting the majority of the teachers rejected the proposal because those students who could not afford the chemical relaxers would feel left out.

Collaboration in the teaching-learning process.

Involving the students in the teaching-learning activities

From the interviews with the teachers, the focus group discussions and my observations, it appeared that the students' involvement in teaching-learning activities varied from teacher to teacher and from subject to subject. The way that science teachers involved students in conducting experiments in the laboratories differed from the way the mathematics teachers involved students in solving sums and from the way the literature teachers involved students in reading poems and story books. This was normal because the subjects were different and the teachers were different too.

The teachers pointed out that they used question/answer sessions and discussion groups to involve students in the lessons. One physics teacher explained that:

> Normally in most practical topics I introduce the new terms and then I allow them to go through the experiments without assistance. Unless somebody is stuck, I just allow them to interact freely with the apparatus and come up with their views. Presently, we use PowerPoint and we encourage discussions. When I go to class I just do one equation and I tell them, '*now go ahead and*

> *do the rest'*. So, I use different approaches depending on the timing, on the apparatus and on the topic I am teaching (junior teacher: C1-T1).

The students expressed similar views about their participation in the teaching/learning process through discussions and question-answer sessions:

> Yes, sometimes a teacher may explain a topic and some students may not understand. The teacher may ask those who have understood to explain to the others to see whether the others can understand. Or sometimes when teachers miss lessons, then students take the chance to discuss. Like in our class, we have a promoter[7] for each subject. So most of the times if the teacher is not around, he'll give some work to the subject promoter so that we either discuss together as a class or first we do it individually then discuss it later or we are divided into groups, do some work then present it to the class (student: C1-FGD2).

In one lesson I observed (English language in Form Two) taught by C1-T2, I noted that there was active participation by the students. The lesson was on 'comprehension' which involved reading a short passage. Each student read a paragraph in turn in a given order followed by a discussion. The students asked questions and commented on each others' answers. The teacher was guiding and coordinating the question/answer sessions.

Teachers discussing teaching approaches with colleagues

The majority of teachers stated that they discussed their teaching approaches with their colleagues but a few noted they did not. The teachers explained that the sitting arrangement in the staffrooms made it easy for them to discuss and collaborate in their various subjects. The desks were arranged in a rectangular manner for each department. In an informal conversation with the

[7] It was explained that a 'promoter' is a student who leads the others in a discussion in a particular subject in each class. She is normally elected by the classmates and confirmed by the subject teacher.

Director of Studies, he explained that the arrangement was meant to facilitate the cooperation among the members of a department in their teaching.

On many occasions, I observed teachers discussing various topics in their subjects, for example, in one instance teachers of English language were discussing something on 'functional English'. I observed the same among Swahili language and mathematics teachers. One teacher explained that:

> We sit as departments in the staffroom facing one another. So, if one feels there is something that needs clarification before going to class, all of us will contribute so that when somebody goes to class she or he is confident. We usually discuss, share notes, set exams and mark as a team. If I feel somebody should mark my class, it should not be an issue. It's the school policy that teamwork is enhanced. Sometimes we share lessons if I want another teacher to go to my class and teach a topic, it's a matter of requesting, '*please go and teach for me this topic*'(middle level teacher: C1-T3).

In all subjects the teachers noted down in a book the amount of work covered for the week which was forwarded to the Principal by the HoDs at the end of the week.

Enhancing equity and social justice

Caring for all students equally regardless of their background and class performance

All the teachers interviewed stated that they treated all the students equally regardless of their background and performance in class. They identified several senior government personalities and ministers whose children were learning in the school whom the teachers maintained did not get any favours. Equally, students were not allowed to have more than one hundred Kenya Shillings on them at any given time. They kept the rest of their pocket money

with the school bursar so that, as one teacher put it, "they do not flash their parents' wealth around because that would intimidate others from humble backgrounds" (middle-level teacher: C1-T4).

Most teachers pointed out that the students were given school uniform to appear equal:

> When they come to Form One you cannot see who comes from which type of background because from the moment they get admitted they are not allowed to be in home clothes. They are given shoes and uniform which make them look equal. And, there is a lot of guidance and counselling that goes on to make the students tolerate one another (middle-level teacher: C1-T3).

One teacher pointed out that they also used 'house talks' to inculcate values of tolerance among the students: "tolerance has become a part of the school culture that we try to promote among the students and inculcate among new ones as they come into the school" (middle-level teacher: C1-T4).

However, one teacher argued that some of his colleagues dealt with students based on their ethnicity. In an informal conversation with him (C1-T2), he gave an example of a student who was elected by the other students as a headgirl but did not come from the local ethnic community. Therefore her election was not approved by the staff "on allegation that she was very bright and making her a headgirl would interfere with her class performance". He found this discriminatory because they had approved 'bright' girls for such positions before. A headgirl was then appointed who comes from the 'local' ethnic community, that most of the teachers in the school belonged to. The teacher maintained that while it was democratic because the majority of the teachers at the meeting supported the idea of the girl not being appointed, the ethnic undertone was discernible. The same issue was also raised by the

students in a focus group discussion even though they did not mention the ethnic factor:

> Sometimes I feel bad because last year we were choosing the cops, and the students elected a particular girl to be a headgirl, but the teachers went and changed it and they gave us somebody who had got fewer votes, which is not democracy. We should be allowed express our full democracy on such issues (student: C1-FGD1).

Some students also mentioned that a few teachers tended to favour some students:

> Some teachers tend to like some students more than others e.g. our Business teacher seems to like the students who do well in the subject and ignore those who do not perform very well in the subject. For example, if you do not perform well in the subject and you are not in class the teacher will not bother asking, but for some students, the teacher will always ask where the student is (student: C1- FGD3).

Prefects' roles and privileges

The prefects stated that they tried to be as tolerant to other students as possible. They (prefects) held talks with the new students to make them understand the virtues of collaboration and tolerance among students:

> Ok, like yesterday when we had a meeting with the Form Ones, we explained to them the rules they are supposed to observe. We told them what is expected of them, for example, if they lose their bearing in the school then they can approach anybody in a gray sweater because prefects wear gray sweaters and we also have badges different from the rest of the students. We explained to them that we are like a family and they should be free to interact with any of us without fear (prefect: C1- FGD4).

The prefects considered that sometimes the other students were not tolerant with the prefects because they (prefects) punished them if they (other students) 'made mistakes':

> The punishments we give depend on the kind of mistake made, for example, one who comes late to the parade cannot be given the same punishment as one who has not spread her bed in the dorm. So, the prefects have to look at the type of mistake made and weigh the appropriate punishment. For example, if somebody has not done the work she is supposed to do during the normal cleaning time, you can make the person work on a bigger portion

> e.g. sweeping the 'corridor' (path in the school). If somebody comes to class in slippers you can make the person to clean the classroom, do the flower beds or sweep the pavements (prefect: C1-FGD4).

The majority of students in the focus group discussions made it clear that they did not want prefects to punish them:

> I think it also depends on the specific prefects. Some are very good and we relate with them very well but there are some who will always want to prove to you that '*am a prefect*'. For example, some will talk to you like you are a small child and some think you have been eyeing their position, some will also give you punishments that is not equal to the mistake you made. I feel they should not be given the powers to punish us (student: FGD3).

The prefects pointed out that they had privileges over the rest of the students, such as sleeping in private rooms in the dormitories unlike other students (who shared cubicles). They also got extra sweaters and ties. Equally, as the headgirl explained:

> I have a self contained room, a kind of en-suite. I can also go to see the Principal any time which others cannot. I am also exempted from cleaning in the school and I also have the privilege of giving duties to the other prefects (headgirl: FGD4).

According to the prefects, the privileges caused 'animosity' between them and the rest of the students. This implies that while the prefect body enhanced the democratic school leadership by giving students avenues through which they aired their views, it also hindered the same democracy by causing intolerance among students.

Despite the 'animosity', most of the prefects insisted that they needed more privileges:

> I do not think as a prefect I have enough privileges. Ok, it's good to be a servant as leader but I think we also deserve some more special treatment. Currently, I eat with the rest of students, share the same dorm with curtain but no door, yet we are not at the same level (prefect: C1- FGD4).

Some students referred to the prefects as 'cops'-policemen, who are not regarded highly in Kenya because they are seen as using too much force on people and corrupt.

An ethic of care and concern.

Mutual care and respect among teachers

The teachers interviewed had contrasting views on this issue even though the majority considered that they treated one another with care and respect. One teacher argued that while there were those who treated her with respect, others did not. She stated that a few teachers cared for others based on ethnic considerations. She claimed that this had been heightened by the political violence in the country at the time because many Kenyans tended to use ethnic affiliation to define their support for political parties.

In the staffroom, I observed a lot of political discussions where the majority of the teachers were supporting the same party. Because most of the teachers were from the same ethnic community some of the discussions were in mother tongue. One teacher mentioned to me that most of the teachers shared the same political standpoint and did not entertain divergent views.

However, some teachers stated that they treated one another with care and respect despite their political and ethnic affiliations:

> We relate quite well. Yes, we may have some 'camps' but they are not so pronounced because we try as much as possible to be one, but you can't rule out those 'camps'. I personally try not to be in any 'camp', but because of my

> name[8], people would just say this one is for this political party. You know that mentality, we are not exempted (senior teacher: C1-T7).

A teacher who was affected by the political violence (her parent's home was burnt down and her family sought refuge in another area), and who came from an ethnic community that was considered 'foreign' in the school, explained that although she was treated with care and respect there were a lot of political undertones and comments from colleagues that made her uncomfortable:

> We do not have obvious divisions in the staff except for the political discussions now. But I believe this will be for a short while. Last year when the political debate was very intense, we could have tea together and as much as I would want to talk, I was very careful with what I say. When the conflict became so bad, several of my colleagues called me to find out if I was safe. So, although we have different political affiliations, we still care for one another though I'm very careful because I belong to the minority in the staff. What I like about my colleagues is that every time they want to say something that they know will hurt me, they apologise to me in advance. I was also given a house here in the school just in case I feel unsafe in my current residence (junior teacher: C1-T6).

Another teacher whose home was burnt by members of the local community during the political violence and who had not reported back to work had his lessons covered by the other teachers:

> Now, we have three teachers who have been affected by the political violence and we are organising counselling sessions for them. There is a teacher who was badly affected because his house was burnt who just came back yesterday. We talked to him and he said he is feeling better. We are also planning as a community to have a fundraising for him because he lost all his property. And, as much as possible, we also made sure we took care of his classes while he was away and we informed the TSC accordingly (Deputy Principal: C1-T8).

Principal's care and respect for the teachers

Most of the teachers interviewed considered that the Principal treated them with care and respect:

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[8] In Kenya, one's ethnicity can easily be identified from the surname because specific ethnic communities have different ways of naming.

> We don't even refer to her with the title Principal, she is our mother. And, the way she relates with us is the same way a mother relates with the children, very understanding, very humane. She is always ready to listen to us. She understands that this is not a district or provincial school. It is a national school with students and teachers from all over this country (middle –level teacher: C1-T3).

The Principal explained that she tried as much as possible to make all the teachers feel welcome, cared for and respected:

> I don't know, may be you cannot quite rule out that there are people who prefer to work together but we have not had any problem. I think people are free to oppose an issue from the Principal, even if they are very close to me. In fact the people who give me hard time are usually the people I trust to work with. They say '*madam that is wrong'* and we discuss until we agree. I also encourage them that when they have an issue, they should come and discuss it so that everybody is comfortable. For example, when one needs to be away for a justified reason, I don't want to hear that s/he went without coming for permission. And the promotions in the school are always on merit. (Principal: C1-T9).

However, as stated earlier, (see '*opportunities for open dialogue among staff'),* a few teachers felt that the principal was only accessible to a select group of teachers and also considered that promotions were on based more on ethnicity than experience.

Mutual care and respect among students

In the focus group discussions most of the students had contrasting views with most of them stating that they were treated with care and respect by colleagues. One student explained that:

> Most of the time we treat each other well, for instance when the Form Ones report we've heard cases in other schools where the senior students bully them but in this school it never happens. Since I joined Form One three years ago, we have all been treating each other as friends. There maybe some cases where you may have some disagreements but it doesn't take a long time to heal (student: FGD2).

However, there were cases when the students considered that they were not treated with care by their colleagues, especially at the canteen where some students jumped the queue but if the others complained then they got hostile. A few students also claimed that their colleagues treated others with care and respect depending on their perceived economic background:

> I would say that students care for one another according to 'classes', as in terms of perceived wealth, academic performance and things like that. For, example just recently I saw a Form One student who came with a very expensive suitcase and her items looked very expensive, meaning that her parents seemed like they are rich. I saw another girl follow her all the way to the dormitory. This old girl felt that the new girl would fit in her 'class'. So, people sometimes tend to relate depending on your perceived status and performance in class (prefect: FGD4).

One teacher (C1-T6) claimed that they had had issues of students tending to relate, and care for one another, depending on where they came from, that is an urban-rural divide. Those who came from the cities such as Nairobi tended to behave 'elitist' and looked down upon their colleagues from the rural villages. Another teacher pointed out that there was also the element of students relating well with "the top achievers in class work" (middle level teacher: C1-T4).

Equally, other students stated that they cared for one another depending on interests:

> It just depends on whether you have the same interests; there are those in school who are known for dancing, they will always walk together and care for one another. Even noise makers are always together and then there are the neutrals who will fit in any group. You see, as the saying goes, '*birds of the same feather flock together*'. Those who like singing will always be together. Then there are societies and clubs such as debating, drama etc. Those in the same clubs also tend to stick together at their free time (prefect: FGD4).

To make students care for one another, the teachers organised induction conferences for the new students to explain to them the virtue of caring and respecting one another:

> So, I want you to see how we start inculcating and inducting new ones into the ***** Girl culture. We allocate new students to senior students who act like their mothers. In the dormitory they attach a form one student to form two students, somebody who will take her around, and educate her on what is going on. The house prefects make sure that these Form Ones are taken by 'good girls' who can help them around. So, we use students a lot to pass on what they have learnt (senior teacher: C1-T7).

School culture

The school had developed a culture that influenced the way they conducted their activities starting with examinations, religion, and discipline. For example, it was tradition that teachers did not cane students. Equally, when new students were admitted they were advised to "pay attention to the school traditions and culture including the school song" (senior teacher: C1-T7).

The school also held cultural days yearly which involved various competitions and performances. The students prepared different items for competition including dancing, drama and adjudicators were outsourced to avoid any bias in the judgements about the winners. The deputy principal explained that the event had been there for so long that it had become part of school tradition.

A few students, however, perceived some of the school traditions and practices as a hindrance to change in the school. One student mentioned that it was a tradition in the school that they did not emphasise co-curricular activities such as drama and music as much as they did in other schools. Thus, despite the fact there were many clubs societies and sports in the

school, some students felt that they did not spend as much time as they needed in sports. This might explain why the students rejected the school routine prepared by the teachers because the students wanted more days for sports:

> Equally, it has been a tradition that in this school clubs and societies are not given much prominence like in other schools - just academics and academics. We've been trying to change that but *wapi*? [in vain]. They just see sports and drama as a waste of time. They do not want to buy costumes yet I think these are important aspects of students' life. They should be more open to change (prefect: FGD4).

Summary

From the responses of the participants and my observations, I can conclude that:

- The teachers and students in Case One School perceived democratic school leadership as participating in school affairs and having the freedom to express themselves.
- The teachers' operations in the school appeared to fit within the school structure. They seemed to interact freely even though a few of them felt left out of the leadership structure.
- The students appeared informed about their rights in the school and were aware of areas where they felt they should have more say, but which they thought they were not being given a chance to discuss, such as the need to treat their hair with chemical relaxers, having the church services changed and managing their pocket money.

I discuss these issues in more detail in Chapter Seven. In the next chapter, I focus on Case Two School.

CHAPTER SIX: CASE TWO SCHOOL

Introduction

In this chapter I discuss Case Two School context including the facilities in the school, access and the daily operations of the school. I also explain the data collection process through interviews, focus group discussion observations and informal conversations. Next, I analyse the data which is grouped into various themes derived from the literature and from the data and finally, I provide a summary of the main issues discussed in the chapter.

The Case-Context

Introduction

This is a district girls' boarding school with about 272 students and 18 teachers, three more teachers than when I conducted the interview with the Principal in Phase One. It is located in a rural area and drew most of its students from the locality. It was started in 2001 and built with the support of the Catholic Church.

Facilities

The school had an administration building that housed the Principal's office, staffroom and the reception. The offices for the Deputy Principal and HoDs were in another building that also housed the library. The students did not have a dining hall and were served by the cooks through the kitchen window.

They would then sit in the open field to have their meals. The school had six classrooms, two dormitories with a third under construction. It shared sports facilities for soccer, netball, volleyball and hockey pitches with a neighbouring primary school.

Access

As in Case One School, when I conducted an interview with the Principal in the first phase of the study, she agreed that the following term (January, 08 - March 08) I could interview teachers, hold focus group discussions with students and generally observe activities in the school. On reporting to the school, she introduced me to the teachers in the staffroom and handed me over to the HoD guidance and counselling to help me around. The following day, I attended a school assembly and was introduced to the students. I was permitted to use the staffroom and identify the teachers who would agree to be interviewed. The HoD guidance and counselling later introduced me to the boarding teacher whose consent I needed to hold focus group discussions because the students were 'boarders' and it would be difficult to get consent from their parents.

Daily Operations of the school

Unlike in Case One School where there were normally three teachers on duty in one week, in Case Two School there was only one teacher on duty every week who led the operations of the school on a daily basis. Two teachers lived on the school compound - the Deputy Principal who was in charge of

students' discipline and the boarding teacher who was in charge of students' welfare. All other teachers lived out of the compound because there were not enough houses within the school compound[9]. The school also had a matron who lived in a room attached to the students' dormitories and security staff.

Data Collection

Interviews

I conducted interviews with six teachers and a follow up interview with the Principal. Unlike in Case One School where all the teachers were TSC employees, seven teachers in Case Two School were BoG employees[10]. I divided the teachers into senior and junior teachers based on the positions they held in the school. In each category, I included TSC and BoG employed teachers. Among the senior teachers, I interviewed the Principal, Deputy Principal, one TSC employed HoD and one BoG employed HoD. From the junior teachers, I interviewed two TSC employed and one BoG employed teachers. I conducted interviews with the Principal and Deputy Principal in their offices and the rest of the interviews in an office for the HoD of guidance and counselling. Each of the interviews lasted between 45 minutes to one hour and was audio-recorded with the consent of the teachers.

Apart from the interviews, as in Case One School, I also had informal conversations with teachers on different matters that I observed in the school

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[9] In Kenya, for the safety of students in boarding schools, the government requires that the Principals and as many teachers as possible live within the school compound.

[10] In Kenya, the teachers employed by the TSC (government) are permanent and pensionable whilst those employed by the BoG are on contract. In public schools, those employed by the TSC are better paid than those employed by the BoG and many BoG employed teachers finally get employed by the TSC.

that were relevant to my study, for example, on corporal punishment, admission of new students, congestion in the classrooms and so on. I wrote down the information from the informal conversations in my research journal soon after the talks. I have included the data from informal conversations in my data analysis.

Focus group discussions

I held focus group discussions with the students in Forms Three (16 years), Four (17 years) and the prefects from the two forms. I identified the students with the help of the HoD of guidance and counselling. I went with her to the classes and asked for 12-14 students who would volunteer to be included in the discussions. I later met the students and explained to them the details of the discussions and agreed to meet at a later date. The focus group discussions had between 12-14 students and were conducted after lessons (4pm- 5pm) in the classrooms. The discussions lasted between 45 minutes to one hour and were audio-recorded after getting verbal consent from students with assurance of their anonymity.

Observations

Observations were confined to specific areas of the school including the staffroom, school assembly, lessons and games. The observations involved being in the school from 8am to 5pm (Monday to Friday) for six weeks.

At the time of this research there was political violence in the country and teachers spent much time in the staffroom discussing politics. Unlike in Case

One School, in Case Two School both the Principal and the Deputy Principal spent lots of their time in the staffroom discussing politics, co-curricular activities and other school affairs with the teachers.

Analysis of the Data

Perceptions of democratic school leadership

The majority of teachers viewed democratic school leadership as allowing people to have the right to participate in matters that affect their lives. As one teacher stated:

> It is where the school administration involves the stakeholders in the management of the school. The administration seeks stakeholders' opinions on any policy that it wants to implement even if it is constructing new buildings, purchasing new items, such as a school bus. If the administration wants to employ more teachers, it should seek the opinion of the HoDs so that the school administration doesn't monopolise decision making. Which means, we are all working together and everybody's voice is heard regardless of one's position in the school (junior teacher: C2-T5).

Unlike the teachers, students had more varied and contrasting views of democratic school leadership. Most of them perceived it as the right of everybody to express what they wanted to say in the school without a hindrance, whilst a few considered it as respecting the teachers and obeying school rules:

> I think democratic school leadership is where a person respects and follows the rules. For students it means we should respect our teachers, be time conscious in the school and obey all the school rules (students: C2-FGD2.

Perceived democratic practices in the school

Teachers' participation in decision-making

All teachers interviewed stated that they were involved in most decisions made in the school including admission of students, discipline matters and departmental budgeting. For example, one teacher claimed that the school was democratic because the decisions made by teachers on issues such as students' discipline were taken seriously by the school administration:

> Yes, I would say there is democratic school leadership in our school. When it comes to discipline of the students, the decisions by teachers are taken seriously. When it comes to admissions of students, all the classes starting with the Form One, we have a panel headed by the HoD guidance and counselling who talk with the parents and when we cannot admit more students they explain to the parents and take the feedback to the administration. And, teachers also get included in decisions such as school budgeting in the departments (junior teacher: C2-T2).

The teachers, however, pointed out that there were some occasions when the Principal made decisions without involving the teachers such as starting another stream of classes in forms One and Two to admit more students:

> When I talk of involvement of the stakeholders in the school, I mean the Principal tries as much as possible to involve her deputy and the other teachers. But recently she decided to introduce double stream without first consulting the teachers. We have been a single stream school since its inception in 2001. She first consulted the BoG and hurriedly started a second stream in Forms One and Two. I thought she should have involved the teachers and discussed the way forward before going for the second stream. It's not a mistake because, as I said, we are still growing as a school. It was a demand from the PTA and the community to admit more students from around. Now, we are in a kind of crisis because the accommodation is stretched. But, the BoG has employed three more teachers to take care of the new classes and is constructing another dormitory (senior teacher: C2-T1).

In my observation, when I attended a Form One lesson, the class was so full that some students shared desks. Later, in a follow up interview with the Principal, she explained that she had admitted more students than 45 in each

stream in forms One and Two[11] because of the high demand from the community. She explained that she did not want to let members of the community down as they had contributed a lot of money to help build the school and were funding the construction of another dormitory for the students.

To illustrate how leadership was shared in the school, the Deputy Principal stated that at the beginning of the term duties were shared out among all the teachers:

> Yes, I think leadership is negotiated in this school because at the beginning of the year, we distribute all the duties to everybody in the school. Like me now, I'm a coach and I'm under the games teacher. As long as I'm under the games teacher, I cannot favour the netball team I am coaching when there is a tournament because I am the Deputy Principal. No, I have to go through the games teacher, and if he says '*no, we are not taking your team to the tournament we are taking this other one*', I have to accept (Deputy Principal: C2-T3).

One BoG teacher commented that there was usually no favouritism in the allocation of the duties by the Principal to the teachers:

> There is a lot of fairness and equality, for example my appointment as the HoD was because I am able to teach more than one subject - Physics, Chemistry and I can also teach Maths and, despite being a BoG employee, I was considered senior compared to others in the department (senior teacher: C2-T6).

Students' perception of leadership practices in the school

The students had contrasting views on the leadership practices in the school. Whilst some perceived the leadership practices as democratic, others thought they were not democratic. For example, some students observed that they had opportunities to complain to the Principal if a teacher missed lessons and they found that to be democratic. However, a few students argued that they

[11] In Kenya, the government requires that schools have an average of 40 students in each class and not more than 45 students.

were not always allowed to do what they thought was suitable for them. For example, one student argued that:

> No, I don't think this school is democratic because sometimes I feel like I cannot be allowed to go to the market on a market day, Thursday. I cannot be allowed to go and buy some items I need and sometimes maybe we make a mistake and teachers cane us without giving us a chance to explain ourselves. I feel that is oppressive and not democratic (student: C2-FGD2).

The foregoing claim by the student corroborates the Principal's assertion, during my interview with her in Phase One when she stated democratic school leadership was not suitable for her school, especially when dealing with the students because the students would make some demands that the school could not meet.

Opportunities for open dialogue among staff

The school normally had three planned staff meetings in a term, one at the beginning, one in the middle and another one at the end of the term. But, if an issue came up in the middle of the term that required a staff meeting then the Principal or Deputy Principal could call for a special staff meeting. For example, when national examination results were released by the government the teachers met to discuss the performance of the school. The Deputy Principal explained that at the beginning of the term they met to "lay foundation for the events coming up in the term including sports, registration for national examination in first term, mock exams in second term and national exams in third term" (Deputy Principal: C2-T3). Within the term they met to assess the progress made within the term on syllabus coverage. At the end of the term they discussed the end of term examinations results, discipline matters and any other issues that might have arisen within the term.

He considered that the meetings provided opportunities for open dialogue to teachers on school matters.

He observed that the teachers also met regularly to handle indiscipline matters among students:

> What we usually do is that we let the teacher on duty to handle a discipline case. If s/he finds that the case is complex one, he forwards the case to me and we involve every teacher. We have decided that we as members of staff all be there. We bring the 'culprit' to the staffroom and we all get involved in the case so that whatever decision we make has the involvement of all the quarters and not only a section of the teachers (Deputy Principal: C2-T3).

Whilst the Deputy Principal perceived that it was democratic to involve all the teachers in discipline matters, at times the process appeared very intimidating to the students involved. I observed instances when students were brought to the staffroom over various discipline matters. In each case, all the teachers would be asking the student questions on the matter in a manner, that I felt, amounted to harassment because the tone was hostile. In one instance there was a girl who had not participated in cleaning the dormitory in the morning. She was brought to the staffroom and each teacher was talking harshly to her telling her how she was "irresponsible and a dirty". The teacher on duty told the girl to go to class but ordered her to come back to the staffroom at games time during which she was ordered to go and clean the dormitory along with two other girls who were also accused of making noise in class.

At the departmental level, the HoD sciences pointed out that they normally had one planned meeting in a term where they allocated lessons to teachers:

> We normally hold a meeting once a term in our department to discuss institutional matters such as teaching load, performance in every subject, e.g. in Maths, Biology, Physics and Chemistry. We also distribute departmental duties among ourselves...during these meetings, the teachers in various subjects write down the equipment that they require and we discuss

> depending on the amount of money that is available. We then forward that list to the Principal and then she buys the equipments. But if something comes up within the term, for example, if we get a new teacher then we hold a special meeting to introduce him/her to the rest of the members in the department (senior teacher: C2-T6).

One teacher also commented that because the Principal was with them in the staffroom most of the time, they felt "free and not operate under any fear. It also gives us a sense of togetherness and a free atmosphere within which to operate" (senior teacher: C2-T6).

Most teachers also considered that getting involved in leadership matters in the school including academic matters and students' welfare enhanced dialogue and understanding among them:

> Yes, we normally get involved in leadership, especially matters to do with academics, students' welfare and discipline. I'm a Form Two class teacher and if there is an indiscipline case that arises in the school I have to be involved. We help the discipline teacher to instil discipline to these girls. We also help the guidance and counselling teacher because that is another area that is demanding...all these make us understand one another very well (junior teacher: C2-T5).

I observed that the discussions in the staffroom were mostly on national politics, students' discipline and games and sports. From the discussions, I gathered that there seemed to be a discipline problem in the school which I discuss later in this chapter.

External Interference

Unlike in Case One School, in this school the BoG, PTA and the Sponsor (the Catholic Church priest) regularly visited the school to discuss the daily operations of the school:

> The PTA and BoG have been very supportive. Except that there are a few BoG members who sometimes want to be in charge of money. One time

> they came and told the Principal they wanted to see the accounts books. We thought that was wrong, it was an intrusion. They were trying to insist that they be the ones to check the books but we know that is done by the Ministry of Education auditors. They would insist that they need some money for sitting allowance and such things. They wanted to dish the money out to themselves. The Principal told us that she refused (junior teacher: C2-T4).

The Deputy Principal viewed the regular visits from the BoG, the PTA and the Catholic Church priest as part of promoting dialogue among the various stakeholders:

> In fact almost every Saturday, the BoG chairman comes, talks to the teachers and we also raise our issues. He talks about teachers' housing. You know the school is still young. The BoG is making a lot of efforts in building more houses and dormitories. They have been mobilising resources and looking for donors. And, the Sponsor has been playing a role as well. The priest is always concerned about the performance of the school. He submits to us the church's plan for the school for the year which we include in the other plans by the BoG and PTA and they also ask us, '*what are you planning in five years time? How should the school be?*' I think they have been playing a major role (Deputy Principal: C2-T3).

In my observation, on one occasion after classes when the students were supposed to go for games, the BoG chairman came to the school and asked to speak to the students. Even though this was not in the programme, the games were suspended and the students gathered in the hall to be addressed by the BoG chairman. The teachers appeared surprised by the new arrangements but the Principal informed them that she did not know in advance that the BoG chairman would be coming to the school. The Principal explained to the teachers that he (BoG chairman) wanted to speak to the students about the poor performance in the national examinations by the previous year's Form Four students which was attributed to their lack of discipline. The BoG chairman therefore wanted to encourage the students to be of good conduct so that they would perform well in the national examination.

In the focus group discussions, one student also stated that because the school did not perform well in the previous national examinations, whenever they went to the Catholic Church, which they shared with the local community, the community members made demoralising comments on the school:

> You know we dropped in the last year's national examinations. Now when we go to church and people tell us that the school should be closed down because we are doing nothing. We feel discouraged, they should help us to improve in our performance and not discourage us (student: C2-FGD2).

Student voice in decision-making.

As in Case One School, in Case Two School the teachers and students identified class meetings, house meetings, and the choice of prefects as some of the areas where students participated in decision making in the school.

Class and house meetings

The class meetings were held every Thursday in the morning. The students discussed matters such as performance in various subjects, noise-making and teachers not attending lessons. According to the Deputy Principal, most of the class teachers did not attend the class meetings because they lived outside the school compound and might not arrive in the school early enough to attend. But, he added that if an issue came up that required the class teacher to discuss with the students then the class teacher went to the class and discussed it, for example, if there was a complaint about a teacher who did not attend lessons.

Most students expressed similar views, that the class meetings helped them focus on matters that concern them in the classes such as their performance in the tests and exams, especially the Form Four students who were preparing for the national exams: "As candidates of this year, we discuss how to improve the mean grade of the school, how to ensure that we pass. We meet once a week on Thursday at seven in the morning" (prefect: C2-FGD3).

The house meetings were held every Tuesday and the students discussed issues such as "cleanliness, noise-making, congestion, water problems and thefts in the dormitory" (student: C2-FGD2). One teacher remarked that the concerns raised by students on different matters were forwarded to the teachers by the dormitory prefect:

> Students have house meetings on Tuesdays. They meet and discuss the problems they are experiencing; thereafter the prefect concerned relays the same to the teachers who can then take necessary action. In the past they have experienced problems with water shortage. The other day when the Form Ones reported, as I told you, we were starting a double stream, so there was a lot of congestion. But, the problem is already being handled. They are almost having the new dormitory ready. They also report cases of theft amongst themselves although some of such cases are usually handled by the boarding teacher (senior teacher: C2-T1).

The prefects confirmed that the students found the house meetings useful for them:

> As prefects, at the dorm meetings we give the students a chance to raise issues about their dormitories and if one has lost an item in the dormitory she can make an announcement. If nobody says she has taken it then we sometimes conduct inspection. I think it is useful because there is no teacher present and so students talk freely (prefect: C2-FGD3).

The choice of prefects

Most students and the majority of teachers viewed the students' participation in the election of prefects as an important chance for them (students) to

express their views and considered it a democratic process. As in most schools in Phase One, the process involved the students suggesting the names of colleagues whom they wanted to be selected as prefects:

> When we are choosing prefects we go through stages. The first one, we let the students make proposals of who they want in different positions in the school - whether the headgirl, games prefect or whatever. They write them down and thereafter the class prefects collect all the papers and bring to the office where we sit as a staff and go through the proposals and make the final list. We consider the students' performance in class and whether you really excel in the area where you have been proposed, for example if you are proposed to be a prefect in charge of games, '*are you really active in that area*?' We also consider good discipline and the general conduct of the student (junior teacher: C2-T5).

However, one teacher felt that the way the prefects were appointed in the school was not democratic:

> I'm afraid the way we select our prefects is not democratic. In my previous school where we had an American Catholic Brother heading the school, we used to give the children a chance to vote for those they want and the teachers did not alter the names of those elected to be prefects. Here, we sit and discuss the girls who have been proposed by other students and decide who should be the headgirl, who should be in the kitchen, and so on (junior teacher: C2-T4).

Interestingly, some students preferred that the teachers vet the names of those who were proposed to be prefects:

> I think it is fair that the teachers approve the names of the students proposed to be prefects because the teachers know better those who can be prefects and are able to control others. If students are given the chance, some will select village mates or friends and they will isolate those who come from other regions (student: C2-FGD2).

According to one teacher, in their duties, the prefects were expected by the teachers to act as overseers of the other students:

> The prefects, of course watch their colleagues on behalf of the school administration. And if there are problems that they have handled on their own *na wamemaliza* (they have settled it), maybe in the dormitory, maybe the case did not warrant to be reported to us, we do not get involved again. Normally, they would report to the boarding teacher that '*this happened in the dorm and we sorted it out in the dormitory*' (junior teacher: C2-T2).

Academic families

This is another way in which the teachers claimed they encouraged the students' voice in decision-making. The teachers met and allocated groups of students to each teacher. The teachers then regularly met the students allocated to them either as a group or individually to discuss students' personal needs. As one teacher put it:

> Even for the students there is a lot of democracy. For example, we have introduced the idea of academic families where we have subdivided the students among teachers so that if a student has an issue, then she can be helped within the family setup. If they have a complaint like being bullied by another student they can present it to the 'parent'. And if a student has made a mistake, then the 'parent' will talk to the student who in turn may be very apologetic. In the family the number is small and the teachers understand the students very well (senior teacher: C2-T6).

Taking students' views into consideration

Whilst the majority of the teachers claimed that on many occasions they took students' views into consideration when making decisions, most students argued that the teachers did not. For example, one student stated that:

> In the kitchen, we have problems because the number of students is increasing. We are almost three hundred now yet the time for meals is very short, so we take the whole one hour queuing to be served food. We suggested that we should have serving done in two places but the teachers did not accept. And, sometimes the food is not enough; the 'ration' is so small that it cannot sustain us in class. And, when we complain they tell us that we did not come here to eat but to learn. So you eat and when you come back to class, all the time, you are thinking that, '*I didn't eat well I'm hungry*' (student: C2-FGD2).

However, a few students disagreed with their colleagues, arguing that the teachers were wise enough to know the amount of food that the students should be served as well as deciding on the most suitable diet for the students:

> I think it is the administration who decides on the diet and the amount of food to be served to students. Ok, even if you don't like it, I think you have to eat it because that's how the school runs. There are no special meals here so you have just to accept the diet the way it is. When we came to Form One, we had a list of school regulations and they wrote that there are no special meals for students (student: C2-FGD1).

All the students in the focus group discussions agreed that the teachers did not consider their views with regard to visiting days:[12]

> For now since there is no visiting day, some parents who go to work have no time to come to school during weekday. The rule is that parents are not supposed to come over the weekend. I think we should be given at least a visiting day. When we raised this issue with the school administration, they talked as a staff but they did not give us a solution, they just said the rule must continue (prefect: C1-FGD3).

In a follow-up interview with the Principal she claimed that when the school had the 'visiting day' during the weekend some of the students had their boyfriends visiting instead of their parents. She explained that she presented the matter to the PTA executive and they decided that students should not be visited during the weekend. She added that this suited the teachers too because many of them lived outside the school compound and did not want to come to school during the weekend. From my informal conversation with the teachers, there appeared to be an inherent fear among the teachers that the students would not behave well if they were visited during the weekend when the teachers were not in the school.

[12] In Kenya, many boarding schools set aside one day in a month when parents/guardians are allowed to visit their children, normally over the weekends - popularly referred to as 'visiting days'.

Collaboration in the teaching-learning process.

Involving the students in the teaching-learning activities

All teachers interviewed pointed out that they involved students in the teaching-learning activities through group discussions and presentations:

> As I told you, I teach Kiswahili so, it depends on the topic. Sometimes they can read quietly and then we discuss. Sometimes when I'm teaching literature, I involve them in providing the illustration and when I am dealing with a play, I involve them in play - acting. If I am teaching poetry, I can choose to let them recite the poem (senior teacher: C2-T1).

Another teacher stated that he selects students he considers 'bright' to teach the others in small groups. A Christian Religious Education (CRE) teacher asserted that in her lesson, she made all students read the Bible in turns:

> I include my students quite a lot in the teaching-learning process. In fact I create teachers out of them because in discussions groups they make presentations. Because I teach CRE where reading the Bible is mandatory, I involve them almost every day except in those topics that do not require Biblical texts. We keep reading and each student reads. We rotate so that I don't skip anyone. Even those who are shy and would want to avoid reading cannot escape because I know them (junior teacher: C2-T2).

Most students in the focus group discussions expressed similar views as the teachers:

> I think we participate enough in the class activities because during class times, everybody is expected by the teachers to contribute. And, the teachers form for us the discussion groups. They decide who joins which group because they are the ones who know our weaknesses (student: C2-FGD1).

These students' argument above is consistent with those who argued earlier that it was the teachers who knew the amount of food they should eat, as well as those who should be elected prefects. Thus, there appeared to be a culture of dependency among some students, a belief that the teachers knew everything that was good for the students and should not be challenged.

A few students however argued that the kind of involvement they had in teaching-learning activities in their classes was "biased". One student lamented that:

> In class, for example, Mathematics lesson we have quick learners and slow learners. Sometimes a teacher comes to class and then asks a question. When a fast learner answers a question, let's say I am a slow learner, by the time I'm trying to think of the answer, the teacher has already moved ahead. And, it is always the same students who answer questions. So, I will not be able to understand what has been taught (student: C2-FGD2).

In one CRE lesson that I observed, I noted that the students were not as active in answering questions as the lessons I observed in Case One School. Similarly, in another lesson (Mathematics) I observed, the teacher did much of the talking and not many students attempted to answer questions asked by the teacher.

Teachers discussing teaching approaches with colleagues

The teachers in the Mathematics department pointed out that they had established criteria where teachers exchanged topics they taught in each class:

> In Mathematics we have established academic groups in terms of classes. And, in these academic groups, if you are in charge of a given class, for example, I am in charge of Form Three. I don't teach the class from January to December. I teach particular topics and somebody else teaches other topics (Deputy Principal: C2-T3).

However, other teachers mentioned that they adopted the approaches used in Mathematics (above) only if one felt that she/he was not competent enough to teach a specific topic.

Unlike in Case One School where I observed the teachers in the staffroom discussing with their colleagues various topics in their subjects, I never observed the same in Case Two School.

Enhancing equity and social justice

Teachers treating all students equally regardless of their background and performance in class

Most of the teachers drew attention to the fact that the students were given school uniform and also made sure that all the girls keep short hair to make them appear equal:

> We make sure that all students are equal, one by the form of dressing. They get their uniform in the school and it is the same. Once they are all in uniform, they are all equal. We also make sure that the girls keep short hair as a way of bringing equality because they will all have the same hairstyle (senior teacher: C2-T6).

Another teacher emphasised that they regularly talked with students about the need by the students to work hard and make their own wealth in future:

> The other thing we have tried as much as possible is to tell students that those homes are not really theirs. They should work hard in school for their own homes. They should learn that even if some of them come from rich families, that wealth is not theirs. It belongs to their families and they have to work hard in order to get theirs (junior teacher: C2-T5).

Among many communities in Kenya women do not inherit property from the parents because they are expected to get married, which implies leaving the parents' home and moving to live with the husband's family. This cultural orientation may explain why some teachers reminded the students about moving out of their parents' to their husbands' homes.

The teachers also asserted that according to the school regulations students were not allowed to bring foodstuff into the school so that they all ate the same food. The school also restricted the amount of money a students was allowed to have on her any given time in the school:

> We also do not allow them to come with certain food into the school such as biscuits, juice because some will carry and others will not afford and this will show inequality. But, we allow them to carry fruits. And, because we have a canteen in the school compound, we allow them to withdraw only one hundred shillings weekly to allow them to buy some few items in the canteen. They keep the rest of the money with the bursar (senior teacher: C2-T6).

The irony of the teachers' claims is that whilst they believed they were trying to make the students appear equal, they were 'denying' the students the right of choice. Equally, as I have already explained, there appeared to be a consistent way in which the teachers made the students dependent on the teachers deciding what was good for the students thus, keeping control of everything that the students did.

The students expressed contrasting views about whether or not the teachers treated them equally regardless of the background and performance in class. Whilst some students agreed that teachers treated them equally, others did not agree. Those who agreed stated that the teachers encouraged them to live as sisters and help one another regardless of their socio-economic and sub-ethnic backgrounds. They added that when the new students reported to Form One, the teachers always insisted that the old students help them settle down.

However, those who did not agree claimed that some of the teachers only bothered about the students who performed well in their subjects. One student remarked that the same biased treatment was extended to their parents:

> I think teachers don't treat us equally. Some teachers care more for those who pass well in their subjects. And our parents are also treated differently. For example, when my parent comes to the school riding a bicycle or walking and my friend's parent comes driving a Toyota Prado and my parent comes first before my friend's parent. The teacher will tend to recognise the one in a Prado. Mine will be ignored and will just sit there and wait until the Prado one is served, which is unfair (student: C2-FGD2).

Prefects' roles and privileges

All the prefects pointed out that they did not favour any students in discharging their duties. As one prefect put it; "when a group of students make the same mistake, we give them similar punishments so that some of them don't complain that we favour our friends" (prefect: C2-FGD3).

They argued that even though they had a few privileges over the other students such exemption from general cleaning duties, they needed more:

> As prefects what makes us different from others is that, we don't perform certain duties like morning cleaning. We supervise others. But, when we go for meals we queue like all the other students. I think we don't have enough privileges, because even now we have not been given special ties, so there is nothing which can differentiate us from the others students. And all the time the other students tell us that we are just like them. We need more privileges so that we can be a little higher than them because we are leading them (prefect: C2-FGD3).

This was similar to the views expressed by the prefects in Case One School who also wanted to be granted more privileges.

Interestingly, a few students who were not prefects also suggested that the prefects should be given more privileges:

> I think the prefects are a special group of students in this school because they are the eyes of the teachers. When the teachers are not around, they can correct us and tell us to do the right things according to the school rules. If there were no prefects, I don't think the students will control themselves on their own. I think students will not be responsible enough and there will be a lot of noise-making in classes and in the dorms (student: C2-FGD2).

This brings bringing out the same culture of dependency mentioned earlier.

Similarly, a teacher commented that sometimes the school administration bought 'a light meal' for the prefects so that the prefects were encouraged to report any issues that arose among the students to the administration:

> Then something else we do is that once in a while we share a soda with the prefects so that they carry out their duties effectively or else it may come to a point when students may do things that are against the school rules and the prefects will not tell us. When they feel they are a little bit 'up' then they do their work well. Sometimes they meet the Deputy Principal to discuss the things that affect them as prefects' body. And if there is one prefect who is doing things that are contrary to the others like breaking the school rules, making noise, then they can address it in that forum (senior teacher: C2-T5).

Ethic of care and concern.

Academic 'family'

As discussed earlier (see '*student voice in decision-making*'), this was a system where teachers were allocated groups of students whom they were supposed to interact with closely and get to know their problems and personal matters. The teachers used the 'family' system to get close to the students and deal with their issues at personal level, thus show care for the students:

> The Principal involves us a lot in the management of the school, for example, she has helped us to form families with students, and every teacher is assigned a number of girls. We meet every two weeks to discuss the problems that 'children' have in school in their academic performance, with fellow students, with teachers and even family matters such as girls disagreeing with their parents and so on. We also use it to help improve on discipline. We warn them that '*I don't want to see my children in the staffroom being punished*' (junior teacher: C2-T5).

Most students expressed similar views that the family system enhanced teachers' care for them:

> Yes, I believe that teachers have a caring attitude towards students because like now we have been grouped and given teachers to act as our parents. We usually have meetings on Thursday and we are free to tell them our problems. If there are problems in class, in the dormitory, we tell them and they help us. At times one may be missing some items and we feel it's not possible to stay without them, for example if you don't have soap, they can buy for you (student: C2-FGD1).

However, in my observation, it appeared like the family meetings lacked the personal engagement between the teacher-parents and the 'children' because the discussions appeared to focus on formal matters such as career choices. For example, on one of the 'family' meeting days, the Principal announced in the staffroom that the teachers were supposed to go and discuss career choices with all the students including:

- Personal skills, abilities, competencies and potential
- The type of career each student likes, the subject combination for the career and the subjects of excellence in the school
- Opportunities available for the said career
- At what level of education do they intend to pursue the career
- The institutions that offer the specified career
- The duration of the career and the cost.

One teacher explained that if there was a topic that needed to be discussed with the students, for example on sexuality, then the principal would announce it to the teachers to read something on the topic. The teachers would then discuss and agree on how to present it to the students so that the students got the same information.

On one family meeting day, the Principal informed the teachers to go and discuss "grooming and neatness for girls and how to relate with boys". On another family day, the Principal informed the teachers that she had organised an external speaker for the Form One students and therefore they would not attend the 'family' meetings. The Form Ones needed an external speaker, according to the Principal, because they were "homesick" and had been sending messages to their parents that they were sick. As a result many parents had come to the school to find out what their daughters were suffering from only to find that the girls were not ill. The external speaker was therefore coming to speak to them (Form Ones) about what the Principal referred to as "life in boarding secondary school".

A few students also stated that at times the teachers were the ones who told them the topics to be discussed during the meetings:

> When we go for family meetings, our teachers will have already decided on the issue to discuss. For example, last week we were discussing about academics. When we met our 'parents', they guided us on how to improve on our academic performance. If you have any problem all the members of the family will help you and tell you what to do (student: C2-FGD2).

The care was also extended to new students in the school. In an informal conversation with one teacher I had interviewed (C2-T5), she explained that they had a matter where a student who was an orphan was admitted into the school but could not raise money to buy the items needed for boarding. The student reported to the school and told the Principal her story which the Principal narrated to the other teachers and students. They raised money for her fees and necessities. She emphasised that "the other students are treating her so well without necessarily considering that the girl is from a poor background" (Junior:C2-T5).

Guidance and counselling

Guidance and counselling was considered by the teachers to be a major factor in the way they cared for their students. The teacher in charge of guidance and counselling pointed out that they counselled students to make them feel cared for and help them improve in their conduct. But, she argued that the work was hampered by the lack of enough qualified counselling teachers in the school:

> Being a teacher in charge of guidance and counselling is very challenging because it comes with a lot of work, and at the same time, I am supposed to attend to my daily duties - teaching, evaluation and all that. So, I find it so difficult to perform to the expected level because of lack of time. I also lack facilities; this room was only availed to me the other day. We have been meeting the girls somewhere on a bench outside in the open. But I try my best to make sure I reach out to those who come out to be helped. The problem is that in this school the girls fear coming for counselling. I've tried so many times to tell them that counselling is not just about talking about problems, it's also about advice. Some of them come and I try to spare time for them. I have been alone in the department but this year we decided to involve all the class teachers (senior teacher: C2-T1).

A few students, however, argued that there were teachers who, at times, did not show a caring attitude towards them. For example, one student explained that:

> Sometimes maybe you go to the staffroom to see a teacher but when you reach and knock on the door, no one will tell you to get in, when you knock the second time, one teacher will start commenting like '*look at your blouse, look at your skirt, go and wear your uniform properly and then you come back*', so you leave before you even say what you wanted say and you will fear going there again (student: C2-FGD2).

Another student also complained that some teachers did not keep the personal matters that the students told them in:

> I have problems with teachers who do not keep students private matters. Because sometimes you go and tell a teacher something personal that happened when you were at home, something very private but later you find the teacher coming to the assembly and saying; '*Some of you are pretending here whilst at home you do this and that yet, here you are disturbing us*' (student: C2-FGD1).

In my observation, I noted occasions when teachers commented negatively on the students for not looking neat. Nevertheless, I also observed students come to the staffroom at various times to consult with various teachers and discuss assignments and the teachers appeared cordial in dealing with them.

The majority of the students considered that the Principal showed care and understanding when dealing with them:

> The Principal is very understanding. When we go and explain to her our school fees problems, she understands. You can go and explain to her that your parent will be paying school fees in instalments and she will not send you home. She understands that some parents cannot get all the money for fees at once (student: C2-FGD2).

Students care for one another

The students had contrasting views on whether they thought they cared for one another or not. Most of them considered that they did not. Many students in the focus group discussions pointed out that they had quarrelled with other students over matters that they considered 'minor' such as delaying to return a book borrowed from a colleague or using another student's basin or bucket to wash clothes.

Equally, one student stated that whenever a student went to consult a male teacher, the other students in the class would accuse her for seeking attention from the teacher:

> The teachers tell us that we should be very close to them, so that if you have any problem you go and see them but the problem is that, let's say after class you follow a male teacher out of the class to ask a question. When you come back to class you find other students giggling and accusing you of taking yourself to be a lover to the teacher. I think it is jealousy and it is discouraging (student: C2-FGD2).

Most students also noted that the lack of care for one another amongst them was demonstrated in the fact that there was a lot of theft in the dormitories:

> In the dormitory most students lose their items and when we report to our teachers, they will not take immediate action, for example, conducting immediate inspections. So we find most students complaining about losing their items. This is common problem in this school, especially losing items like socks and the inner clothes. They steal and mark them and claim that it is theirs (student: C2-FGD2).

Mutual care and respect among teachers

All teachers noted that they cared and respected one another well regardless of their different ethnic backgrounds. For example, one teacher explained that:

> We tend to help each other where there is need. Indeed we don't even know who is senior and who is junior in this school. We don't know who is employed by the BoG and who is employed by the TSC. And, we have several welfares in the school. We have one where we each contribute around two hundred shillings a month and keep. In case a member of staff is bereaved or in case you are blessed with a baby we buy for you some gifts (junior teacher: C2-T2).

Students' discipline and corporal punishment

As was expressed by most principals in the first phase of this study, I noted that when the teachers in Case Two School talked of corporal punishment, they had spanking and caning in mind. All the teachers interviewed except one found the use of corporal punishment in the school appropriate:

> I think that corporal punishment is suitable. As guidance and counselling teacher, I feel the government did not prepare the ground enough before implementing the ban on corporal punishment. In this school we don't have trained counsellors and so we do not have direct substitute for corporal punishment. Corporal punishment is sometimes necessary. Like a doctor can in some cases prescribe that your tooth should be extracted. Even if it's very painful, it cures. So when a student is very rude, you inflict some pain and they start behaving better. It works, for example, to a student who fails to hand in her assignment. You cannot keep telling them how important it is to hand in an assignment and the exam is approaching. You inflict some pain and next time you find them submitting the assignments (senior C2-T1).

Another teacher claimed that corporal punishment was only a problem in a mixed school because the girls felt embarrassed to be spanked in the presence of boys and vice versa:

> I think corporal punishment shouldn't have been banned because the teachers were not prepared for the ban. The Majority of schools do not even have trained counsellors. Some of us may be having this small kind of training here and there, but we need qualified counsellors to be in charge. In a girl's school, corporal punishment is effective. But in a mixed school, it can cause problems. When you beat a girl in the presence of the boys or cane a boy in the presence of girls, they feel so humiliated and they will not respect you (junior teacher: C2-T2).

The Deputy Principal also claimed that the Government should not have banned corporal punishment because it was a suitable way of maintaining discipline in schools:

> You know when the law was enacted banning corporal punishment we were left in dilemma because the students were used to it. When it was stopped the students became very indisciplined. Teachers were not really prepared well, they were just told to look for alternative ways of punishing students. There are simple mistakes that students make e.g. a student knows that today is a Tuesday and she is supposed to sweep the dormitory but she decides not to, saying, '*after all, the teacher will not punish me. If she sends me out, that is a holiday for me. I will simply enjoy*'. So if you go and start counselling her, she just looks at you and says, '*this teacher has nothing to do with himself*'. Some students also do not want you to tell them to go and remove a stump. She will tell you '*no mwalimu (teacher) you better cane me tumalizane na wewe hapa (and get it over with)*. I think that is democratic because it is their choice (Deputy Principal: C2-T3).

In an informal conversation with the Deputy Principal, he maintained that he had asked students the type of punishment that they would prefer to be given and 99 percent indicated that they preferred to be caned. Thus, he concluded that the students still preferred being caned to the other types of punishment such as being sent home or being made to cut grass on the compound. One teacher commented that corporal punishment was necessary in their school because the students in the school "do not understand counselling, it does not make sense to them" (senior teacher: C2-T6).

Only one teacher interviewed argued against the use of corporal punishment, pointing out that talking to students paid more dividends than corporal punishment. She explained that in her previous school which was run by American Catholic Brothers, they did not cane students and the students behaved very well. She also attributed her stand on the fact that after her Bachelor's degree, she went to the US and worked in a school for two years before going back to Kenya:

> In my view, I don't believe in caning. Because if you inflict pain in order to change a person, that person may learn to fear or hate you, which is dangerous as far as performance of students is concerned. In my previous school we never caned students. So, I believe in counselling and giving non corporal punishment. For example, now if a child has performed poorly in class, surely caning her is not going to help. It makes things worse. But I do not oppose it in this school because I do not want to have problems with the teachers and the administration... I know many parents cane their children. It is like a religion that you punish the child by caning, '*spare the rod and spoil the child*' as they always say, but I still believe in counselling (junior teacher: C2-T4).

The students, on the other hand, had contrasting views with a few of them supporting being caned whilst others opposed it. Those who supported it gave various reasons:

> I know the teachers were trained on how to handle students with care and not beat them like somebody killing a snake. And they will not just beat students without a reason, there must be a reason. So I think caning is part of life and the teachers should continue with it, there is no problem , after all we are caned at home as well and we don't die (student: C2-FGD1).

> I prefer being caned to being given punishments such as cleaning the library. You go and clean the library alone whilst the teacher is in class going on with his lesson. Maybe it is Maths and you did not want to miss that lesson. So you decide that you better get caned and go to class (student: C2-FGD2).

However, some students argued that corporal punishment was not appropriate:

> You know some people prefer being corrected politely. For example, in class, let's say we are given an exam then you fail. I feel that it's not fair that a teacher comes and canes the student. I think they should come and

> explain to the student what they did wrong and how it should be done (student: C2-FGD1).

> I think caning is not the appropriate way of correcting mistakes. If you are caned, you'll keep on making the same mistake because you are used to the cane. You just decide that after all I will just be caned and it's all over. I think talking is better way of correcting a mistake. We are big people and we can behave well without being caned (student: C2-FGD2).

During my observations, I noticed many instances when teachers punished students in ways that I felt did not reflect as much concern for the students as the teachers expressed in the interviews. At one time there was water shortage in the school and the girls were allowed to go to the neighbouring church compound to fetch water for their personal use. Whilst they were out of the school compound, two girls, according to the teachers, visited a boy who lived in a neighbourhood. One girl was called to the staffroom for questioning by the teachers including the Principal and the Deputy Principal. The girl explained that they met the boy and talked to him but they did not go to his house. She stated that her parents' home was near the school and therefore she knew people from the area. In the process of questioning, the Principal spanked the girl on the shoulder and went to her office. The Deputy Principal then ordered the girl to kneel down. One teacher produced a cane from a hidden corner behind cupboards supposedly to scare the girl so that she could tell the truth because the teachers seemed to believe that the girl was lying. Finally, the Deputy Principal ordered her to go to class so that the case could be handled later after classes.

There was also a case where a student who had been sent home to bring school fees came back with the money and went to the dormitory without taking it to the Bursar. The following day the student alleged that another girl

had stolen the money. The Principal sent both students home to bring their parents. Both parents came to the school with their children the following day and after a long discussion the alleged 'thief' was cleared of any wrong doing, whilst the girl who had carried the money to the dormitory was given a tree stump to uproot before being allowed to go to class. After two days trying to uproot the tree stump-which she did not manage, she was allowed to go to class.

Unlike in Case One school, in Case Two School, I observed that each time there was an 'indiscipline' matter, the teachers talked of the need to cane the girls. Almost every day there was a 'discipline' case involving the students being handled in the staffroom. In an informal conversation with the boarding teacher, she explained that because there were a lot of 'indiscipline' problems, she regularly inspected how the students were conducting their studies during the night prep and when the students were going to bed.

On one of the days, I observed some of the previous year's Form Four students who came to pick up their 'leaving certificates'[13] from the school. The Principal commented that because the students had "mistreated the teachers and were very rude", she would write for them very bad leaving certificates unless - "they must come and kneel before me and beg so that they realise that I am important". She further directed the teachers "not to clear the students". Normally, for the students to get their leaving certificates, they had to get clearance forms which were signed by all the teachers to

[13] School leaving certificate in the Kenyan context is like a reference letter given to students by heads of schools at the end of every stage of the education system e.g. from primary or secondary. It describes students' attributes other than academics such as personality, behaviour, group compatibility, special skills in sports etc which are not directly tested in the national examinations. Many institutions require it from students whenever they apply for further training or jobs.

confirm that they did not owe the school any item such as books, or did not destroy any equipment in the laboratory and had paid all the school fees.

In most cases I felt that the students did not have opportunity to explain themselves, yet the teachers and some students believed that their school was democratic.

Summary

The findings here suggest that:

- Teachers perceived democratic school leadership as participating in school affairs and having the freedom to express themselves without a hindrance. The majority of them felt the school was democratic and they were involved fully in decision-making in the school. The students, on the other hand, had contrasting views. There were those who perceived democracy in terms of obeying the school rules and respecting teachers.
- There seemed to be a culture of dependency where the most students looked up to the teachers (adults) and those in positions such as prefects to know everything that was suitable for them (students).
- While most students felt that teachers cared for them, a few stated that the teachers favoured those who performed well in their subjects. Some claimed that the bias was extended to the parents, arguing that teachers tended to pay more attention to parents who come to the school driving.

- Most teachers found the use of corporal punishment suitable in the school. This was supported by a few students who viewed it as a continuation of what they were used to at home. Most students, however, did not support it.

In the next chapter I discuss the data from Phase One and the two Case Schools.

CHAPTER SEVEN: DISCUSSION

Introduction

In this chapter, I discuss the data from Phase One and both Case Schools with reference to literature presented in Chapter two. I base my discussion on the aim of the study which, as stated in Chapter one, is to investigate how principals, teachers and students perceive democratic school leadership and how these perceptions inform practices in their schools. My discussion is subdivided into seven themes. These are:

- Leadership and management,
- Perceptions of democratic school leadership,
- Perceived democratic practices,
- Culture and school leadership,
- Religion and school democracy,
- Ethical values in democratic school leadership.

Leadership and management

The interviews with principals in Phase One suggest that they view their roles more as school managers than leaders. This is because they emphasise the duties they perform more in relation to their positions as principals than the inspirational values, influence and vision that epitomise leadership (Bush, 2008a & 2003). For example, one principal pointed out that: "The principal of today is not the sole decision-maker. She is the coordinator in the new management arrangement..." (P1).

When dealing with the teachers, most principals explained that they involved teachers in management issues including financial management and discipline matters. For example, when drawing up the schools' budgets for the year, departments were required to hold meetings and budget for the year including travel and tours, laboratory requirements and co-curricular activities.

The principals also delegated duties to teachers based on their (teachers') specific positions of responsibility such as heads of department. During the interviews, all the principals either persistently used the concept of 'management' or used it interchangeably with that of 'leadership'.

They also mentioned that the training they got at KESI, which was optional, focused more on school management. For example, one principal pointed out that:

> Currently, participation by other stakeholders in school management is the trend, when I involve other stakeholders I achieve a lot because I have a wider approach to the management of the institution. When we were being trained in senior management by KESI, we were told to include students, parents and the community in the operations of the school (P4).

Although this study did not set out to find out how the two concepts of leadership and management were used in the schools, it became important in context of the changes that the government required of the principals; that is, to embrace a more democratic school leadership than was the situation before. As revealed from the interviews, the principals made it clear that they had no guidelines on how to implement these requirements and therefore applied their intuition to initiate the changes in their schools. In view of the leadership skills they required to lead the changes in their schools, they argued that the kind of training they got at the university when training to become teachers was not adequate for one to be a principal. Even the

principals who had Masters Degrees observed that the programme did not prepare them adequately for their duties in school.

My findings are consistent with arguments by Mulkeen *et al.* (2007: x) in a World Bank review on, 'retaining secondary school teachers and head teachers in Sub-Saharan Africa', where they point out that:

> Many secondary school administrators are ill-prepared to meet the demands posed by the changing nature of their jobs. Organized and systematic training in educational leadership and effective and transparent management that goes beyond the occasional workshop presently offered in most systems is urgently needed for principals. Principals' critical new roles as instructional leaders within schools, builders of learning communities among teachers, and developers of strong community participation in schools are widely recognized, although few principals have any preparation for this array of new responsibilities.

Mulkeen *et al.* emphasise that a more systematic approach to the selection and training of principals would lead to stronger and a more democratic school leadership.

Similarly, in their study of training needs of secondary school principals in Uganda, DeJaeghere *et al.* (2009) also found that school principals were lacking in leadership skills to effectively manage their schools. They suggest that leadership training is urgently needed for the principals and their deputies that address skills such as preparing budgets, managing overall school performance, identifying teachers' training needs, working with community members in fundraising, and working with Ministry of Education officials to lead change in their schools.

On democratic schools leadership, Bredeson (2004) asserts that it is the hoped for outcome of purposeful training to create spaces for democratic

leaders to develop and experience democratic values in their on-going professional development and in their daily work.

The mechanism of recruiting teachers to become principals in many sub-Saharan African countries is another issue that Mulkeen *et al.* (2005 and 2007) argue is unsystematic and not necessarily based on professional criteria. They point out that dominant tradition has been to recruit from within the teaching profession, often as a reward for good performance and long years of service. This was evident in my study as pointed out by most principals in Phase One (see Chapter four, section on *'Qualification and training of principals'*).

Therefore, my study shows that the lack of leadership training for principals could be a challenge to the implementation of democratic school leadership as required by the Kenyan Government. This is because, as discussed in Chapter two, the widely accepted view that teaching qualifications and experience alone provide a sufficient basis for school leaders is gradually being replaced by an understanding that principalship is a specialist position that requires a different set of skills from those of classroom teachers. Moreover, the training that the principals get at KESI focuses more on routine management duties than leadership.

Perceptions of democratic school leadership

All the principals and the teachers from the two Case Schools viewed democratic school leadership as participation by teachers, parents and students in the decisions in the schools and where the will of the majority is respected. They contrasted these views to situations where decisions were imposed on others without much consultation. Most teachers pointed out that dialogue is a major component of democracy. These views are consistent with conception of democratic schooling as lived through participation in the everyday practice of school life (see Woods, 2006; Møller, 2006; Gale and Densmore, 2003; Furman and Starratt, 2002; Starratt, 2001). However, these writers point out that democratic school leadership is more than participation in decision-making, and includes establishing conditions that also foreground respectful relationships, associations, consideration, consultation, empathy and active cooperation and community mobilisation. It is concerned with the cultivation of an environment that supports participation, sharing of ideas, and the virtues of honesty, openness, flexibility, and compassion (Starratt, 2001). Starratt argues that individuals can only learn to understand themselves as democratic individuals by becoming members of a community in which the problems of communal life are resolved through collective deliberation and a shared concern for the common good.

Most principals and teachers expressed a common view that democratic school leadership was suitable for their schools because it enhanced the achievement of school goals, encouraged teamwork among them and boosted their morale. For example, one principal remarked that: "when you

implement something and teachers know they are the ones who suggested it then that brings a sense of belonging and boosts their morale" (P6). This agrees with San Antonio's (2008) argument that the level of commitment to an organisation and the willingness of the stakeholders to go beyond their expected participation increases when people are allowed to participate in decision-making. In a study he conducted in the Philippines to examine the impact of implementing democratic school leadership via advisory school councils in Philippines' public secondary schools, he reveals that the 'democratically' led group had higher levels of commitment, empowerment and trust compared with the control group.

Similarly, in Woods' (2005) discussion of therapeutic rationality, he points out that democratic leadership brings a sense of well-being, social cohesion and positive feelings and recognises the intimate connection between internal and external social relationships.

In my study, there appears to be a sense of positive feelings among the teachers in both Case Schools who perceived the leadership in their schools as democratic - discussed later in this chapter (see *opportunities for open dialogues among staff*).

Suitability of democratic school leadership

There were contrasting views among principals and teachers as well as between some teachers and the principals on the suitability of democratic school leadership for students. While most teachers in the two schools

considered it 'partially' suitable - a view shared by 10 of the 12 principals interviewed in Phase One, the Principal of Case Two School considered it unsuitable. Those who considered it partially suitable insisted that dealing with students required "partial" or "guided" democracy. They maintained that if the schools were fully democratic then the students would make demands that did not conform to the expectations and regulations of the schools.

These claims suggest that these teachers and principals did not believe the students were capable of making informed decisions on school matters and were likely to make unreasonable demands. This is consistent with Oerlemans' (2007) argument that an assumption is made frequently by parents, teachers and others that students lack the understanding and experience to participate in decision-making. In a study she conducted in three schools in Australia to explore students' perception of educational change, she concluded that there would not be substantial differences in practices in schools if transformations were not accompanied by changes in how teachers and principals think about their students. She emphasises that students are often seen as abstract learners, yet out of school many students carry heavy responsibilities, family cares and employment concerns, contrasting sharply with the lack of autonomy offered them in most school settings. Gunter (2001:126) refers to it as "traditional exclusion of young people from the consultative process" which she considers is founded upon an outdated view of childhood that fails to acknowledge children's capacity to reflect on issues affecting their lives.

I would, therefore, argue that even if the Kenyan government requires school principals to adopt democratic school leadership, this may not be implemented fully by most principals and teachers in their dealings with students unless they (teachers and principals) change their attitudes and see students as people who can make responsible decisions and not necessarily bully others or make demands that are against the school rules.

The views were, however, different when it came to dealing with the teachers. The principals in the two Case Schools and most of the teachers considered that democratic leadership was suitable for the teachers and stated that they (teachers) were treated democratically. Nevertheless, two teachers in Case One School claimed that there were some practices in the school which they considered undemocratic and discriminatory, especially the way the Principal awarded promotions to teachers. As discussed earlier in Chapter five, one teacher lamented that there was an ethnic bias in the promotion of teachers in the school, claiming that the Principal favoured teachers from her ethnic community. He maintained that raising the same issue in public, for example in a staff meeting, would lead to "an automatic transfer to some remote school" and so he preferred not to talk about it. The fear of the teacher about discussing publicly this supposed bias raises the issue of the freedom to question, to criticize, and to imagine which are central to all accounts of democracy, particularly within the participatory tradition (Fielding, 2007). Fielding argues that if democracy is primarily a mode of associated living and a conjoint communicated experience through participation, then within-school, practices that provide spaces for genuine dialogue are important.

The claim by the teacher that there was bias in the award of promotions could easily affect the way he conducts his duties in the school. This is because, as Anderson (2003: 18) explains, an individual's behaviour depends on the way in which he believes he is treated as "a worker, as a member of a team and as part of an organisation".

However, I need to mention that there were other teachers in Case One School who did not belong to the same ethnic community as the Principal's but who had been promoted and therefore did not share the same views of ethnic bias. This, therefore, introduces an interesting and complex dimension to perceptions of democratic school leadership. That is, whose views count in this kind of dialogue? In the light of my discussion earlier on Case Study approach (Chapter three), I explained that, as a researcher, I focus on both the unique as well as the common issues raised by the participants. Therefore, the unique views of the teacher who claimed that the principal promoted teachers on ethnic basis is as important as the opposing views raised by the other teachers.

The perceptions of democratic school leadership by students in both Case Schools did not differ much from those of the teachers. Most students understood it to be respect of individual rights and allowing people to express their opinions over issues that affect them without any prohibition. However, in Case Two School, a few students considered democratic school leadership as respecting the teachers and obeying school rules. This view implies that even if the teachers are wrong, they must always be obeyed. This could be

attributed to the students' cultural backgrounds which I discuss in detail later in this chapter.

Like the teachers, there were contrasting perceptions among students in each school about whether democratic school leadership was practised in their schools. In Case One School, most students argued that even though they expressed their views on various issues, such as in the development of the strategic plan, changing of the school routine and elections of prefects, the teachers still had the final word. This argument confirms Fielding's (1973, 2004) fears based on a review of literature on school leadership from all over the world that, at times, consultative forums in schools are simply used as a sign of 'enlightened autocracy' but the teachers still made the final decisions on what goes on in schools.

Similarly, Woods (2004, 2005, 2006) points out that if the school genuinely wants students to get involved in decision-making then they should do more than asking students what they think about things and devolve more decision-making responsibility to the students and help them to develop their skills and full human potential.

Based on this discussion, my study therefore reveals that most of the students' and teachers' perceptions of democratic school leadership were not very different from those discussed in the literature. However, in spite of this knowledge, it seemed that the majority of the teachers did not find it suitable dealing with students democratically and therefore advocated for 'partial'

democratic leadership. Students on the other hand wanted more democratic space.

Despite these different views, the principals and the teachers identified practices in their schools that they considered democratic which I discuss next.

Perceived democratic practices

In this section, I discuss some of the practices within the Case Schools that the principals, teachers and students considered democratic. I also highlight some of the practices that I observed in the schools and compare these observations with the views expressed by the principals, teachers and students.

Opportunities for open dialogues among staff

The nature of operations and dialogue among staff in the two Case Schools was quite different. While in Case One School teachers tended to operate through committees and departments, in Case Two School teachers operated as one big unit. Thus, in both schools the teachers' opportunities for open dialogue among themselves were embedded in the schools' management structures.

In Case One School, most of the teachers pointed out that democratic practices in their school were enhanced by the school management structure

which made clear the role of each teacher in the school. As seen in Chapter five (fig. 3), within the school the Principal is at the top and the class teachers are down in hierarchy. In between are various positions, with each teacher in charge of a specific subject or an extra-curricular activity, for example, senior head of department in charge of accommodation and boarding. Apart from the departments, there were committees such as 'senior management' and 'middle management' staff that made decisions on matters relevant to their areas. The committees provided opportunities for each teacher to participate or contribute to some aspects of the decisions made in the school.

Case Two School on the other hand, operated as one group and all the teachers were involved in deliberations on school matters such as discipline, students' welfare, and guidance and counselling. But, as in Case One School, there were teachers in charge of these departments and divisions who chaired the deliberations, for example, matters on discipline were chaired by the Deputy Principal.

These findings agree, at least in part, with a study conducted in schools in Denmark on democratic school leadership where Moos (2008) found that in all the schools where he conducted his study there was very close and tight collaboration within the leadership teams. Moos found that they met daily, kept each other informed about their work and attuned their interpretations and decisions before they were announced publicly. The same applies to Møller's (2006) study in Norway where she found that formal leadership teams had intuitive working relationships because they were well aware of themselves as co-leaders and they trusted each other. This intuitive

understanding developed as part of close working relationships between and within the teams. They synchronize their actions through having a regard for their own plans and those of their peers. According to Møller, mutual trust seems crucial in their relationship in addition to collaboration among teachers and between the leadership team and the teachers

Similarly, literature reveals that the type of involvement in school operations by the teachers as discussed above contributes significantly to members' work-related motivations. For example, Leithwood and Jantzi (2008) in a study conducted in Ontario Canada aimed at improving understanding of the nature, causes and consequences of school leader efficacy on student learning, found that teachers' contributions to students' achievements were often influenced by the direct experiences that they (teachers) had in leadership roles in the schools. They emphasise that organizational structures facilitate the work of organizational members and enhance teachers' practices in schools. In relation to democratic school leadership, Woods and Woods (2008) argue that if an organisation is committed to an expansive notion of democracy, then the fundamental purpose of its structure (its institutional frameworks and culture) is to feed the roots of democracy by fostering the growth of all of its members. Therefore, involving them in dialogue through committees and departments is one way of doing this, as seen in Case One School.

However, even though the school structure facilitated the operations and dialogue among staff in Case One School, literature shows that some terms such as 'senior management' and 'middle management' staff which have

been taken from the field of business management, have different connotations when used in schools. Discussing the structural changes in schools in New Zealand, Fitzgerald (2009) explains that one of the more immediate responses to the challenges of self-management was the establishment of structures that were linked directly with roles and which, by inference, emphasized a teacher's position in a hierarchy. She argues that middle leaders were simultaneously responsible for their subject areas, yet the focus on administrative tasks positioned them as part of the school management and organisational hierarchy. She maintains that new public management concepts such as mission statements, vision and values, strategic plans and the auditing of teachers and school performance reinforce the apparent rationality of structures and hierarchies. In Fitzgerald's view, labelling teachers and teams as 'senior management' and 'middle level management' has the net effect of privileging the work of some teachers and creates a binary between leader and follower. Thus, there appears to be a focus on the bureaucratic rather than the professional nature of leadership in schools.

The same could be said of my study, as seen in Case One School where a few teachers felt that only a "privileged" group of teachers were close to the Principal. One teacher, for example, remarked that the number of times she interacted with the Principal in church was more than she did at work - to emphasise how rarely she interacted with the Principal. On the other hand, the senior heads of department and heads of department regularly met the Principal informally either to consult her on specific matters relating to their duties or to have informal talks whenever the Principal had 'free' time.

In view of the above discussion, I would argue that although opportunities for dialogue among the teachers in schools is enhanced by the leadership/managerial and the curriculum structures within schools, the same (structures) may also constrain participation of those who do not hold positions of authority. Nevertheless, the opportunities for open dialogue among staff appear dependent on the internal dynamics of each school and can not be pegged down to any specific template that is applicable to all schools.

Student voice in the schools

Although the majority of the teachers in both Case Schools and the Principal of Case Two School expressed disapproval of 'full democracy' when dealing with the students, they identified some practices in the schools that they considered to 'give' the students a voice. In both Case Schools the principals and the majority of the teachers as well as most students identified the election of prefects, class and house meetings as examples of practices in the schools where the student voice was recognised.

Selection of prefects

In both Case Schools the students participate in the selection of prefects by nominating those they wanted to hold various positions in the school. The proposed names were then vetted by the teachers who confirmed the final list of the prefects. However, in both schools most students and a few teachers felt that the process was not democratic because the teachers had the final

say on who were finally confirmed as prefects. In both Case Schools, the majority of teachers insisted that they (teachers) were under no obligation to explain to the students the reasons for rejecting some of the nominees. This type of arrangement is not consistent with Woods' (2005) argument about decisional rationality which requires the sharing of power genuinely beyond consultations which involve simple expression of views. He emphasises that the stakeholders (in this case students) should be enabled to make choices and decisions that are rightfully theirs and to develop their own opinions and relationships.

Similarly, Leren (2006) in a review of various studies on students' voice in Norway argues that although the students' council appears as a foundation in the student voice, it is not enough to have an election process in a system in order to gain influence. Gaining influence requires affiliation to the school management, and for the staff to have a positive attitude toward the work done by the student council.

In my study, the students' full participation in the selection of prefects was lacking in both schools. Interestingly, as explained in Chapter six (see '*student voice in decision-making*'), in Case Two School a few students suggested that they did not need to be consulted by the teachers when selecting the prefects because the teachers were their elders and knew the students with the right qualities to be prefects. This argument suggests that some students had more faith in the teachers than their peers, possibly because of the cultural orientations in many ethnic communities in Kenya

where adults are expected know everything (which I discuss in more detail later in this chapter).

My study, therefore, reveals that as much as the students 'elected' the prefects in both schools, which was a positive sign in enhancing student voice, the teachers still controlled the process. This may also be attributed to the conflicting role of prefects.

The conflicting role of prefects

In both schools prefects had a dual role of representing the other students while at the same time acting as an extension of the school administration. In the former, the prefects met and discussed matters, such as the diet and parents' visiting days, then presented to the teachers. This role conflicted with their other position as an extension of the school administration with powers to punish other students whenever they (other students) 'made mistakes'.

The conflicting role of prefects raises an issue about how they can speak on behalf of the other students, yet they (prefects) also have interests related to their privileged position. Literature reveals that there is a problem of how best a group of students who themselves hold privileged positions can speak on behalf of others. For example, Fielding (2004), reviewing the literature on student representation, argues that there is always a problem of speaking for others which lies in our tendency, by default or by design, to mistake or betray the realities and interests of those about whom we speak in favour of our own. Drawing on Alcoff's (1991/92) study, Fielding identifies two different

kinds of difficulty in speaking for others. Firstly, there is the extent to which the social location or identity of the speaker shapes the way they see and understand the world. Therefore, we can only hesitantly speak on behalf of others because we lack, not only understanding, but the means to understand those whose interests and causes we would represent (Fielding, 2004). A second difficulty is the extent to which the nature of the differences that characterise different standpoints is intertwined with issues of power. He argues that the practice of privileged persons speaking for or on behalf of less privileged persons has actually resulted (in many cases) in increasing or reinforcing the oppression of the group spoken for.

Based on the foregoing discussion, it is evident from my study that the privileged positions of the prefects compromised their desire to speak for the rest of students. Thus, while the prefect body enhanced democratic school leadership by giving students avenues through which they aired their views, it also hindered the same democracy by causing intolerance among students. In view of this, I would argue that, in order to enhance student voice in the schools, it may be necessary to have the prefects operate purely as representatives of students along the lines of students' council (as discussed by Møller, 2006 and Trafford, 2003) without the extra role of punishing the other students.

Class and house meetings

The other perceived democratic practices in the schools for students were the class and house meetings. In both Case Schools, class and house meetings were held once a week. In these meetings, the students discussed matters

such as the teachers who missed lessons, the performance of the class in comparison to the other classes, cleanliness and noise-making.

In a sense, these matters that the students discussed in the meetings dealt more with person cleanliness and class performance than policy issues in the schools. All the same, the meetings could be considered a sign of giving students a chance to talk about basic issues in their classes and dormitories. This finding is similar to that by Møller (2006) in her study in a school in Norway where she found out that in the past, the Student Council had only been engaged in deciding 'minor issues' such as the kind of food that should be offered in the cafeteria or if the school should allow soft drink machines. However, unlike in my study, in Møller's study she found that with time, the students created a vision of how they might be involved in more vital matters, such as profiling the school for the outside world through an informative website developed by the students. Møller explains that in the beginning the students had to use all the formal channels for decision making but after a while it became easier to make informal decisions. The school principal developed trust in them and so they just needed to keep him informed.

The kind of trust discussed in Møller's study was lacking in Case Two School, but can be attributed to differences in socio-cultural contexts of the two studies. In Case One School, however, the students were starting to participate in more serious matters such as changing the daily school routine and contributing to the making of the strategic plan. However, from my interviews with the principals in Phase One, it appeared that the students'

involvement in changing the routine as seen in Case One School was the exception and not the norm.

Apart from class and house meetings, the schools used *barazas* to give students a voice as seen in Case One School where the Principal also regularly held individual discussions with students. Literature reveals that this approach works well with students. For example, Angus (2006), reviewing the literature on students' voice in Australia and UK, argues in favour of this approach. He argues that the starting point for facilitating students' participation in decision making in schools is when the school, its teachers, and leaders reach out to students, moving to meet them rather than expecting the students to adjust to the entrenched school and teacher paradigms, and attempting to engage them in relevant and interesting school experiences. Equally, in discursive rationality, Woods and Woods (2008) explain that participation aims to create a climate where exchange and exploration of views and open debate are possible. In a sense, the *barazas* provide opportunities for open debate and allow for alternative interpretations and perspectives and for seeking consensus on what would constitute appropriate action supported by good reasons (Woods, 2006).

In view of the above, I would conclude that, to promote students' voice in the schools, it may be necessary to hold more *barazas* with students in an environment where they have opportunities to express their honest and genuine views on various matters in the school.

Taking students' views into consideration when making decisions

The findings in my study indicate that while the teachers in both Case Schools claimed that they normally took students' views into consideration when making decisions, the majority of students argued that there were many instances when teachers did not take their views into consideration when making decisions. For example, the items sold in the canteen, the need to apply 'chemicals' relaxers on their hair and the need for hot water for taking showers in Case One School.

In Case Two School, the students felt that they should be allowed to have long hair and their parents be allowed to visit them (students) during the weekend. This finding is consistent with Argyris and Schön's (1974:6-7) discussion about theories of action where they observe that:

> When someone is asked how he would behave under certain circumstances, the answer he usually gives is his espoused theory of action for that situation. They explain that this is the theory of action to which he gives allegiance, and which, upon request, he communicates to others. However, the theory that actually governs his actions is his theory-in-use, which may or may not be compatible with his espoused theory; furthermore, the individual may or may not be aware of the incompatibility of the two theories.

Argyris and Schön (ibid:viii) argue further that at times the lack of awareness of the incompatibility between espoused and theory in use, "may be culturally as well as individually caused and maintained". Thus in my study all the principals' and the teachers' from the two Case Schools answers to the question on how they perceived democratic school leadership were rational and pragmatic. As explained at the beginning of this chapter they viewed it (democratic school leadership) as participation by teachers, parents and students in the decisions in the schools and where the will of the majority was

respected. That is, where decisions were not imposed on others without much consultation (espoused theory). However, in practice the evidence from the students suggest that teachers did not take most of the views expressed by students into consideration when making decisions (theory-in-use).

This finding is also consistent with the findings of a study conducted by Critchley (2003) on the nature and extent of students' involvement in educational policy-making in Canadian school systems. She found that students were often used as tokens where information was collected from them for the purpose of policy-making but not used in the formation of policies. However, it is important to mention that while Critchley's study was a large scale study that covered all Canadian provinces and territories using questionnaires, mine was conducted in two schools and initial interviews with twelve principals.

The reason the teachers gave for refusing students permission to apply chemical relaxers on their hair in Case One School and for all students to keep hair short in Case Two School was to make the students appear equal. This, according to most teachers was in the best interest of the students. These justifications lend credence to the view discussed by Stefkovich and Begley (2007) in looking at the alternate ways in which ethical leadership in the best interest of students is conceptualized in educational literature. They found that educational leaders and practitioners frequently justify their actions as in the best interests of the student but in some forms, 'best interests of

students' are more organizational or policy-related rhetoric than a genuine regard for student choice.

In view of the above discussion, my study reveals that there were several matters that the teachers did not allow students to engage in because they were not suitable for students but for which the students thought otherwise. This, therefore, highlights the tension between the extent to which students could have their way in the schools and what amounts to teachers' legitimate roles in deciding what is suitable for students.

Students' involvement in class activities.

My findings suggest that in both Case Schools the students' involvement in teaching/learning activities varied from teacher to teacher and from subject to subject which is, perhaps, to be expected because the subjects and the teachers were different. The teachers used question/answer sessions and discussion groups to involve students in the lessons. To an extent, this is similar to what Stromstad (2003) and Møller (2006) found in their studies in Norwegian schools. In Møller's study, the students maintained that their participation in deciding classroom activities varied from teacher to teacher. She points out that during the fieldwork, she observed how the approach to engage the students differed from teacher to teacher; some were successful, others were less successful, but they were all committed to the task.

Similarly, Pryor (2008), in reviewing the need for educational leaders to advocate teaching about democracy in schools in the US, considers that it is important to centre democratic leadership in the processes by which

schooling is carried out as well as in a curriculum which includes experience of democratic ideals. Thus, she argues that the students' involvement in class activities would make them experience democratic practices within their classes. Without such approach, she asserts that the success in sustaining the foundations of democratic thought is less likely. Pryor (2008) emphasises that it is also important to recognise that students who live and work in a democratic classroom learn more about how to participate in a democratic society.

However, the nature and extent of involvement of students in the teaching-learning process in the two Case Schools in my study differs from Møller's (2006) as well as Stromstad's (2003) studies because in my study the involvement did not include the choice of materials, teaching methods and evaluation. As discussed in Chapter one, the Kenyan education system is centralised and the syllabus is laid down centrally by the Kenya Institute of Education. Therefore, the students were least involved in planning much of their work. This also differs from Møller's (2006) study where she found that most teachers involved students in planning and in establishing criteria for evaluating their schoolwork or were invited into the planning process. Equally, Stromstad (2003) found that democratic practice in the classrooms was of particular importance when it came to the students' choice of learning materials and working method of departments. Stromstad, therefore, emphasises that as students share in planning and influencing their own school work they gain experience in democracy in practice.

In Case Two School the teachers pointed out that they selected students whom they considered 'bright' to teach the others in small groups. This, perhaps, explains why some students in Case Two School claimed that the kind of involvement they had in teaching-learning activities in their classes was 'biased' because the teachers only concentrated on the students they perceived as 'fast' learners and ignored those perceived as 'slow' learners.

Branding some students 'bright' and selecting them to 'teach' the others raises an argument that it could make those not considered bright feel excluded and discriminated against. This may lead to what Shields and Mohan (2008:295) refer to as "deficit thinking" where misplaced assumptions are made repeatedly over time about the less advantaged students' abilities, making them receive the message that they are not good enough. When these students consistently find themselves marginalized and excluded in these ways then school becomes irrelevant to their material conditions. Shields and Mohan argue that when these students discover how much additional effort they must make to succeed than many of their more advantaged peers, many of them may leave, believing that school is simply not for 'the likes of them'. They stress that unless we create schools and classrooms in which all children are equally included and respected, in which all students can develop intellectually without having to hide their deep beliefs or dismiss their experiences, then we fail as educators.

I would therefore conclude that, although the teachers made attempts to involve the students in the teaching-learning process through discussion groups, questions-answer methods, the teachers still controlled what

happened in the classes, by deciding the discussion groups for students and deciding the students perceived as bright to help the others. This may work against those who are not viewed as bright.

The other practices that the teachers claimed they carried out in the best interest of the students were counselling and corporal punishment which I discuss next.

Counselling and corporal punishment

After the Kenyan government banned corporal punishment in schools in 2001, it created a post of head of department in charge of guidance and counselling in each secondary school. Each secondary school is therefore expected to have at least one teacher trained in guidance and counselling. However, my findings suggest that to date, guidance and counselling is not adequately conducted in the schools because of a lack of trained teachers and as a result many schools resort to the use of corporal punishment to maintain discipline. This was evident in Phase One and Case Two School. In the latter, all the class teachers were involved in counselling even though they were not trained. They, therefore, found the use of corporal punishment 'appropriate' based on reasons such as:

- It was parents' and students' preference.
- It was the best way to reduce indiscipline in schools.
- It was culturally acceptable.
- Christianity- 'spare the rod and spoil the child'.

My findings confirm what other studies have found out about the use of corporal punishment in schools in many African countries (for example, Harber, 1997/2002 in Botswana, Kenya, Malawi, Nigeria; Oplatka, 2004 in Ghana and Nigeria; Soneson, 2005a/b in South Africa, Zambia; McIvor, 2005a/b in Kenya and Ethiopia).

The findings are also consistent with literature on the use of corporal punishment in other parts of the world. For example, Greydanus *et al.* (2003) argue that adults who were physically punished as children are more supportive of corporal punishment than those who were not. They observe that advocates of corporal punishment in schools feel that it is, or can be, an efficacious technique of training and discipline. They are of the opinion that if this technique is removed, there will be greater disciplinary difficulty in schools leading to increased insecurity for the teachers. This idea was evident among the principals in Phase One of my study.

In another study conducted by McClure and May (2008) in schools in Kentucky, US, measuring the cultural, social-economic strain and social capital to predict the prevalence of corporal punishment, they found that the use of corporal punishment might be in large part a function of culture. Similar arguments were advanced by most principals in my study who justified the use of corporal punishment as culturally acceptable. For example, one principal, using the racial and socio-economic/cultural background of the students as a justification, maintained that the students from Asian and affluent backgrounds who were not spanked at home responded well to counselling unlike those from the 'slums' for whom

counselling did not work and therefore had to be spanked. Similar results have been found in other studies (see: Owen, 2005; Robinson *et al.*, 2005; Middleton, 2008).

Arguments for the use of corporal punishment were not only advanced by the Principals in Phase One and teachers in Case Two School, but by some students in Case Two School as well.

The majority of principals and most teachers asserted that there was need for strict discipline of the students even if it meant using corporal punishment to "save the students from themselves"(P6). The teachers seemed to believe that the more the 'indiscipline' cases increased, the more they needed to apply more severe forms of corporal punishment. However, the use of corporal punishment did not seem to reduce the 'indiscipline' instances in Case Two School. Thus, as numerous studies demonstrate, corporal punishment is ineffective and often fails to suppress negative behaviour or teach pro-social behaviour (Robinson *et al.*, 2005). Robinson *et al.* (2005) contend that in many instances the student who receives corporal punishment receives it repeatedly over time, indicating its ineffectiveness. This argument may explain why there were many perceived indiscipline cases in Case Two School.

In Case One School, however, they did not use corporal punishment. It was a tradition in the school and was carried over from the colonial times when the school was for white students only. Yet, from my observation the school did not have as many 'indiscipline' cases as was in Case Two School. As evident in Phase One and Case Two of my study, the situation in Case One School

appeared to be the exception rather than the norm perhaps, because of the socio-cultural circumstances.

In the context of this study, I can conclude that the use of corporal punishment to 'maintain discipline', apart from being undemocratic, did not seem to produce the functional results intended by the schools as was evidenced in Case Two School. Its use was mainly attributed to cultural practices which I discuss next.

Culture and school leadership

In this study, the views expressed by participants in both Case Schools and my observations suggest that both the local community culture and the school culture influenced the practices in the schools. For example, in Case One School, the Principal pointed out that when she first came to the school, she found a culture in the school that she would now describe as 'democratic', such as no use of corporal punishments on students, consulting teachers over various matters and listening to students whenever they had issues to raise. She noted that these practices had been upheld over a long period of time and were grounded in the daily operations of the school.

Equally, it appeared that the way students and teachers participated in decision-making was embedded in the established cultures within the school. The activities such as religious practices, the yearly school cultural week, the induction of new students and handling of discipline matters all seemed to be part of a long established tradition.

Culture also featured strongly but, at a different level in Case Two School and Phase One where many participants expressed the view that allowing students to have what they considered 'too much democratic freedom' was not compatible with the cultural set up that the students were used to in their homes - alluding to the fact that in the societies the students did not have much freedom. As discussed earlier, this argument was advanced to support the use of corporal punishment in their schools.

The claim by these teachers and principals is consistent with literature that schools as organizations exist within, and are integral part of societies and therefore people who live in the society and work in organizations bring their cultural values with them into the organization (Anderson, 2003; Dimmock and Walker, 2005). Dimmock and Walker explain that the reality of school life results from the complex interplay of cultural elements from society and locality, on the one hand and organizational culture on the other. Similarly, Anderson (2003) points out that the individual cultural characteristics of people in educational leadership and managerial positions are demonstrated through their decisions and actions that in turn, affect all the people working in the organisation, including the learners. Thus, the teachers and principals are likely to bring whatever their cultures are into school practices.

The foregoing argument could explain why most teachers in Case Two School (in an attempt to make students feel equal), kept reminding the students that even if some of them (students) came from background that the teachers considered 'rich', the wealth was for their parents and brothers, and

the girls would not benefit except for the payment of their school fees. This could be because Case Two School admitted all its students from the local ethnic community as did all the staff except two teachers. Therefore, it was possible to align itself with the values of the surrounding community, reinforcing 'cultural consistency' (Dimmock and Walker, 2005). The same might apply to other schools in Phase One of this study whose principals emphasised the need to handle the students in a manner that was similar to how they were handled in their communities.

The cultural lens can also be used to explain why some students in Case Two School perceived democracy to be respecting and obeying what teachers said. It might also explain why the teachers and principals felt that students could only be 'given' 'partial democracy'. As already explained in chapter two, in many traditional Kenyan (and African) societies, children are socialised to listen and take instructions from adults. Such cultural practices are changing with time, but their traces are still strong in many organisations including schools, and many principals and teachers still disapprove of any challenge from students, who they expect to follow instructions without questioning them (Otula, 2007).

In Case One School, school culture did not seem to align itself with any local ethnic culture and developed its own culture. This could be because it admitted students from diverse cultures in the country and had teachers from different ethnic communities, and was also located within a town. Thus, As Dimmock and Walker (2005) point out, where there are no clear alignments,

individuals may adopt one set of values at work (in the organisation) and another set outside in the society.

The differences between the two Case Schools underpin the notion that each school is unique and supports the growing significance of school culture and context in assessing educational policies, leadership and practice (Dimmock and Walker, 2002). Similarly, as Bush and Haiyan (2002) argue, the combination of values, beliefs, rituals and symbols that represent the specific culture of each school differentiates it from other schools, even those in the immediate vicinity. These differences between the two Case Schools also reinforce the argument that, in much the same way that societies at large possess distinctive cultures, so do organizations such as schools (Dimmock and Walker, 2005). Schools develop their own set of values and priorities, myths, legends, rituals, ceremonies and ways of doing things which underpin the behaviour of the members and influences the way members interpret the events in the organisation (Bush and Anderson, 2003). Just as in the larger society, some in the organization may deliberately and consciously cultivate and perpetuate certain cultural features to distinguish the organization from the others, and give it an identity to which members feel they can belong (Dimmock and Walker, 2002).

My study, therefore, reveals a strong evidence of the influence of the local societal culture in the practices in Case Two School than in Case One School. The societal cultures appeared to hinder democratic practices in Case Two School even though, as the teachers argued, it worked for them. This highlights the tension between the government requirement for

democratic school leadership and the cultural practices of the ethnic communities within which the schools were located. On the other hand, Case One School had developed a strong organisational culture that was unique and internally constructed because it was not located within any one local community. The organisational culture facilitated practices that could be labelled democratic – but, at times bureaucratic as well.

Religion and school democracy

Religion, in this case Christianity, seemed to be a factor in getting the students to be obedient, respectful to and care for each other in both Case Schools. At the same time, it was also used to advance practices that could be deduced from literature as 'undemocratic'. For example, in both Case Schools, the church programmes seemed to ignore the minority groups who were not Christians. In Case One School, to illustrate further how democratic the operations in the church were, the Chaplain gave an example of a 'research' the school conducted to find out the students' attitude towards the chapel services with the intention of using the findings to improve the way the services were conducted.

However, as seen in Appendix one, this 'research' did not seem to address the issues of religious minorities. Thus, as Osberg *et al.*(2006) in a study conducted in three schools in California, US to examine how students can be involved in school reforms found out, if a school conducts a study on students' problems then it demonstrates the school's commitment to soliciting student input about the problems in the school. But, by the same token,

schools that design surveys without student input might overlook certain areas of inquiry that students would point to as vital to understanding their experiences. Fielding (2004: 306) expresses similar views, arguing that: "initiatives that seek student opinion, e.g. via questionnaire or focus group, on matters identified, framed and articulated by teachers/other adults are unlikely to go beyond the initial flush of enthusiasm". This seemed to be what happened in Case One School.

The religious practices were not any different in Case Two School where all students were required to attend the Catholic Church services every Sunday and Wednesday evenings. Unlike in Case One School where Muslims were exempted from church services on Sunday, in Case Two School, there was no provision for any other minority religious groups such as the Seventh Day Adventists whose church services were held on Saturdays.

This kind of exclusion of minority voices could undermine all the good intentions that schools might have. As Pryor (2008) argues, the necessity for a free minority voice is a second pedagogical, indeed social/political structure parallel to a larger freedom from inequality. Lack of options for the minority voice and the continuation of power of the majority undermine potentially socially just leadership. She contends that we should also ask whether educational leaders are aware of the minority voice, even though in democratic conditions the majority voice often rings strongest.

In the context of my study I would conclude that, although two Case Schools used religion to promote good conduct and care among the students, this

notion was compromised by the lack of provisions for minority religious groups. This could jeopardise the attempts to have a socially just leadership which I discuss next.

Ethical values in democratic school leadership

In discussing ethical values, I have adopted Starratt's (1991) classification of the ethics of social care and the ethics of social justice because this captures the two aspects that were evident in the two Case Schools.

The ethics of social care

Social care and respect among teachers (including principals)

The findings suggest that in both Case Schools, most teachers considered that they treated one another with care and respect. However, as stated in Chapter five, in Case One School two teachers argued that some of their colleagues as well as the Principal cared for others based on ethnic consideration. These views, however, were not surprising because, as I discussed in Chapter two, in Kenya the ethnic community cultures are stronger than the national culture and therefore people tend to build relationships based on ethnic affiliations. This could extend into the school as well.

In Case Two School, the teachers were unanimous that the principal treated them with care and spent much time with them in the staffroom which, the teachers considered as good care. They also considered that the teachers treated each other with care. This is consistent with Lashway's (1996)

argument that much of a principal's authority is moral and that it is imperative that teachers be convinced that the principal's point of view reflects the values teachers support.

Principals' and teachers' care for students

My findings suggest that in both Case Schools the majority of students felt that the principals treated them with a lot of care and concern. In Case One School, the students gave an example of an instance when a student was hospitalised and the Principal showed a lot of care and freely allowed other students to go and see her. Even though it could be argued that the Principal was merely doing her duty, the students viewed this as a sense of care and concern. In Case Two School, the majority of the students considered that the Principal showed care and understanding when dealing with them, especially on matters related to school fees.

The students' view is consistent with Stefkovich and Begley's (2007) argument that a genuine regard for a student's best interests emerges as a major influence on principal leadership practices in two ways: first, they point out that principal's valuation processes are heavily oriented towards a concern for the well-being of students. Second, Stefkovich and Begley observe that principal's response when confronted with ethical dilemmas suggests that the best interests of students feature prominently as the ultimate influence on these administrators' decision making.

Equally, in both Case Schools, most students expressed the view that teachers treated them with care and respect. The idea of teachers and

principals expressing a caring attitude towards students is very important because a school principal must not only behave responsibly as an individual, but must create an ethical institution (Starratt, 1991). This requires a great deal of self-reflection, open-mindedness and an understanding that making ethically sound decisions profoundly influences others' lives (Stefkovich and Begley, 2007). Thus, democratic leadership is desirable for schools because they reflect socially mandated ethical commitments to collective processes (Begley and Zaretsky, 2004). Woods and Woods (2008) refer to this as ethical rationality which they point out invokes commitment to truth and appreciation of positive potential and recognition that humans are capable of making mistakes as well as the significance of the social dimensions of the development and testing of knowledge.

However, in both Case Schools, there were a few students who maintained that there were teachers who did not treat them with care and respect. These students expressed reservations about teachers who told other teachers personal matters that students discussed with them in confidence as well as those who made negative comments on students in class. In this respect, these teachers did not seem to realise that their words and actions were important to, and had an impact on, students' lives, feelings and self image. Thus , as (Stromstad, 2003) argues, this calls for teachers and school leaders to strive to create within the school a climate of tolerance and to encourage the development of a democratic culture which requires that students be treated with care and respect.

Academic families

This was a system used in Case Two School to give students an informal forum in which they could express themselves and discuss personal matters with teachers. However, as explained in Chapter six (see '*academic families*'), in my observation it appeared like the 'family' meetings lacked the personal engagement between the 'parents' and the 'children' because the Principal seemed to set the agenda for teachers' discussions with the students.

Nevertheless, the importance of such forums is highlighted by Mitra (2006) in a study conducted in three schools in San Francisco designed to find 'best case' scenarios of student voice efforts. She points out that student forums (student-focused activities) were intended to help teachers to gain a better understanding of student perspectives. Overall, the forums were meant to help reduce tension between teachers and students, increase informality and help teachers and students to identify one another as persons rather than as stereotypes.

Care and respect among students

In both Case Schools, students had contrasting views, some explaining that there were instances when they were treated with care and other instances when they were not. In Case One School, a few students claimed that their colleagues treat them with care and respect depending on their perceived socio-economic background. They also claimed that the behaviour of

students who came from the cities such as Nairobi tended to be 'elitist' and they looked down upon their colleagues from the rural villages. They also considered that there was an element of students caring more for those perceived to be "the top achievers in classwork".

In Case Two Schools, the students claimed that the majority of them did not care much for one another. They pointed out that they quarrelled with other students over matters that they considered 'minor'. They also revealed that there were a lot of theft cases in the dormitories and bullying of junior students by senior ones. In this respect, Stefkovich and Begley (2007) point out that while students may have the right to free speech, they also have the duty to exercise this right responsibly. For example, they argue that while non-violent protests are clearly a student's right (given the appropriate time, place and manner), bullying and harassing other students is not.

Therefore, Stefkovich and Begley note that responsibility is also an important component of the ethic of care. They assert that while the ethic of rights is a manifestation of equal respect, balancing the claims of other and self, the ethic of responsibility, rests on an understanding that gives rise to compassion and care - thus, the Biblical rule; 'do unto others as you would have others do unto you'. This means that if students expect to be treated with care and concern, they also have to do the same to their fellow students.

In the light of the above discussion, my study reveals that, to a large extent, the ethic of social care existed in both schools among the teachers and between the teachers and students. The same could be said among the

students in Case One School but to a much lesser extent among the students in Case Two School.

The ethic of social justice and equity

Caring for all students equally regardless of their background and class performance

In both Case Schools, all the teachers asserted that they treated all the students equally regardless of their background. They drew attention to the fact that the students were given school uniform and were not allowed to have more than one hundred Kenya shillings (about £8) at any given time in the school. In Case Two School, the teachers made sure that all the girls kept short hair whilst in Case One School they were allowed to keep long hair but not use 'chemicals' relaxers.

The irony of the teachers' claims is that while they believed they were trying to make the students appear equal, they did not realise they were denying the students the right of 'choice'. In this regard, Shields and Mohan (2008) argue that although social justice may not 'make up' for the disadvantages experienced by some students, it is still the only meaningful way to address the needs of disparate student groups. They assert that if we do not create a more equitable playing field, students whose home backgrounds do not mirror the values and practices on which schools are organized will have less opportunity to succeed than their peers. However, this argument raises a potential tension between the school culture and the students' cultural background because creating a learning environment that reflects the background of one group may in a way disadvantage another group.

Shields and Mohan (2008) add that it is central to an educator's ability to create learning environments in which all children experience success, in which all children can become curious, inquiring and critically reflective learners. Shields and Mohan's view is consistent with the approach taken by McKenzie *et al.*(2008) who argue that educators who focus on social justice must raise academic achievement, prepare students to live as 'critical citizens', and create inclusive and academically challenging classrooms. To create inclusive classroom learning environment educators will need to distinguish clearly between what is sometimes called students' ability to learn and their opportunity to learn (Shields and Mohan, 2008).

The discussion above also raises the question: whose definition of justice should prevail? As discussed in Chapter three, interpretivists, "hoping to enhance the stability of the collective by moving toward a consensual definition of social justice, would encourage a culture of dialogue" (Johnson, 2008:309). Thus, educational leaders who are interpretive in orientation would discern the competing interpretive realities held by people within the school and move towards negotiating a consensus among them so that the work of the organization can be done. On the other hand Johnson (2008:311) argues that "postmodern concerns which reject attempts to move towards consensus would seek to identify and describe the multiple meanings of social justice at play in the collective and the power differentials perpetuated by these". They would attempt to de-construct and expose those definitions of social justice that oppress. For example, in both schools, the teachers' beliefs that the girls keep short hair (Case Two School) and not using

chemicals relaxers to treat their hair (Case One School) to make students appear equal plays into the postmodernist thinking that the dominant power of the teachers prevails over that of students who wanted otherwise.

However, there is also evidence that students and the teachers co-constructed 'partial' democracy and organisational culture as seen in the views of a few students and the majority of the teachers in Case Two School on corporal punishment and appointments of prefects. In Case One School there was also evidence of students and teachers moving towards consensus as seen when students rejected a school routine made by the teachers and made a new one, as well as students' participation in class activities and the general care of students by the teachers.

In the context of my study, I can therefore conclude that although teachers made attempts to treat students with care and in a just manner, there were instances when they treated students in ways *that could be considered* unjust, perhaps without deliberately planning to do so. The ethic of care and justice among students varied between the two Case Schools. Whilst in Case One School most students considered that they were treated with care and respect by their colleagues, in Case Two School the majority of students felt they were not treated with care and respect by their peers.

Reflections on the developmental conception of democratic practice

Although I adopted the developmental conception of democratic practice discussed by Woods (2004, 2005 & 2006) and Woods and Woods (2008), it is important to mention that the concept of ethical rationality is abstract and difficult to operationalise in a study. Thus, in my study it was not easy to establish how ethical rationality was practised by the students and teachers in schools. For example, Woods (2005) observes that ethical rationality aims to create an environment in which people are encouraged and supported in aspiring to 'truths' about the world which applies to questions of value and meanings as well as empirical statements. It is also concerned with "the search for veridical meaning which comprises more than arbitrary assertions and has some purchase on what is truly and enduringly important" (Woods 2005:12). Woods further argues that "ethical rationality raises the issue of who and what is counted as legitimate in contributing to the search for truth – namely, the distribution of internal authority" (Ibid). By explaining that ethical rationality is first among equals, amongst the democratic rationalities, he emphasises the importance of ethical rationality in advancing the developmental democratic practice. However, when conducting a study it becomes difficult to put this in practice in both data collection and analysis. This is because ethical rationality deals with 'truth' which is a moral issue and touches on the 'goodness of human beings' which is not easy to tease out from participants. As Stefkovich and Begley (2007) warn, because ethics are often interpreted in culturally exclusive ways, and do not require empirical

evidence to justify their adoption, they can be a very troublesome category of values to employ as guides to action in culturally diverse schools and communities. This is because school administrators increasingly sense the need to be accountable for their decisions. Thus, school administrators naturally gravitate towards values grounded in rational consequences and consensus as guides to action and decision making whenever that is possible.

Therefore, in this study I used my intuition to find out from the students and teachers whether they felt that they were treated with kindness and care in the school. For example, to establish how teachers felt they were regarded by the principals, I asked them if they met the principal informally regularly and what they discussed whenever they met. Using follow up questions based on their answers, I was able to tease out from the teachers' feelings about how the principals related with them outside their formal duties and if they felt valued as human beings both by the principals and their colleagues regardless of their positions in the schools.

I also used other literature on moral ethics and social justice discussed by Møller (2006), Stefkovich and Begley (2007) and Starratt (1991) to get the gist of how these issues of moral truth could be captured in an interview with the participants. For example, Møller (2006) identifies an ethic of care and a concern for the common good as elements of democratic school leadership, pointing out that they concern how the students feel the teachers relate to them as well as how students and teachers relate among themselves. Thus, the ethic of care seeks to establish whether the students feel that the

teachers trust them and express a caring attitude towards them and how safe students feel in the school. It also encourages teachers and students to accept one another for who they are and treat them as much. Møller observes that it also requires the principal to talk with the teachers about almost everything that is going on in the school and care for the staff members. It is, therefore, important that the principal organises social events to develop a shared feeling for the school.

Therefore, based on Møller's (2006) discussions, I asked the students and the teachers if they felt they were treated with care and respect in their schools. I was also able to find out from the teachers and students if their schools regularly organised social events in the schools and what these events meant for them.

The difficulty to operationalise ethical rationally notwithstanding, the other rationalities of the developmental democratic leadership in practice were straight forward and easy to discuss with the participants during data collection and analyse. For example, in decisional rationality, it was possible to find out from the teachers and students how they participated in decision making in the school. In discursive rationality, it was feasible to establish from the teachers and students about their involvement in respectful dialogue before decisions were made and, in therapeutic rationality it was viable to capture from the participants their personal feelings about their involvement in school matters. In essence, therefore, it was possible to operationalise these rationalities when conducting the study, which was not the same with ethical rationality.

Summary

Based on the foregoing discussions, some of the key issues that emerge are:

- Lack of leadership training for principals could be a challenge to the implementation of democratic school leadership as required by the Kenyan Government. This is because principalship is a specialist position that requires a different set of skills from those of classroom teachers. Moreover, the training principals get at KESI focussed more on routine management duties than leadership.
- Most of the students', teachers' and principals' perceptions of democratic school leadership were not very different from those discussed in the literature. However, in spite of this knowledge, it seemed that the majority of the teachers did not find it suitable dealing with students democratically and therefore advocated for 'partial' democratic leadership for students. Students on the other hand wanted more democratic space.
- Although opportunities for dialogue among the teachers in schools was enhanced by the leadership/managerial and the curriculum structures within schools, the same (structures) seemed to constrain participation of those who did not hold positions of authority. The opportunities for dialogue among the teachers appeared dependent on the internal dynamics of each school and can not be pegged down to any specific template that is applicable to all schools.
- The privileged positions of the prefects seemed to compromise their desire to speak for the rest of students. Thus, while the prefect body enhanced democratic school leadership by giving students avenues

through which they aired their views, it also seemed to hinder the same (democracy) by causing intolerance among students.

- There were several matters that the teachers considered unsuitable for students and did not allow them (students) to engage in but for which the students thought otherwise. This highlights the tension between the extent to which students could have their way in the schools and what amounts to teachers legitimate roles in deciding what is suitable for students.
- Although the teachers made attempts to involve the students in the teaching-learning process through discussion groups, questions-answer methods, the teachers still controlled what happened in the classes, by deciding the discussion groups for students and deciding the students perceived as bright to help the others.
- The use of corporal punishment to 'maintain discipline', apart from being undemocratic, did not seem to produce the functional results intended by the schools as was evidenced in Case Two School. Its use was mainly attributed to cultural practices.
- There was stronger evidence of the influence of the local societal culture in the practices in Case Two School than in Case One School. The societal cultures appeared to hinder democratic practices in Case Two School even though, as the teachers argued, it worked for them. This highlights the tension between the government requirement for democratic school leadership and the cultural practices of the ethnic communities within which the schools are located. On the other hand Case One School had developed a strong organisational culture that was unique and internally constructed because it was not located

within any one local community. The organisational culture facilitated practices that may be labelled democratic.

- To a large extent, the ethic of social care existed in both schools among the teachers and between the teachers and students. The same could be said among the students in Case One School but to a much lesser extent among the students in Case Two School.
- Although teachers attempted to treat students with care and in a just manner, there were instances when they treated students in ways that could be considered unjust, perhaps without deliberately planning to do so. The ethic of care and justice among students varied between the two Case Schools. Whilst in Case One School most students considered that they were treated with care and respect by their colleagues, in Case Two School it was not the same.

In conclusion, there was a sense of what I refer to as a 'rational' perception of democratic school leadership which did not have much influence on the practices in the schools. 'Rational' perception here refers to the reasonable and balanced answers the teachers and principals provided when asked what they perceived democratic school leadership to be. As discussed earlier in this chapter, they expressed the view that it was the participation of teachers, parents and students in the decision-making process in the schools and where the will of the majority is respected. These responses were based on their cognitive assessment of democracy derived from their formal education and awareness of human rights requirements. These views are consistent with conception of democratic school leadership, discussed in literature, as lived through participation in the everyday practice of school life

(see Fielding, 2001, 2004, 2006, 2007; Møller, 2006, 2009; Starratt, 2001, 2004; Stromstad, 2003; Woods, 2004, 2005, 2006; Woods and Woods, 2008). These well thought out and cognitively perceived answers are therefore what I refer to here as 'rational' perceptions. From my findings they did not strongly influence the practices in the schools, especially the teachers' dealings with students.

In contrast to the rational perceptions, there were the 'culturally embedded' perceptions which seemed to influence much of the practices in the schools (theory-in-use). That is, when I discussed with the teachers and the principals some of their practices in the schools such as the use of corporal punishments on students, most of them emphasised that in the African culture it was normal for parents to use corporal punishment on young people. They argued that the African child was used to corporal punishment at home and therefore treating the African children differently at school would 'confuse them'. These principals and teachers viewed issues of human rights as a western culture and claimed that the use of corporal punishment was, at times, preferred by students and parents and, therefore, democratic.

Similarly, in discussing the suitability of democratic school leadership, most teachers in the two schools and the principals in phase one of my study considered that dealing with students required "partial" or "guided" democracy. As discussed earlier in this chapter, these principals and teachers maintained that if the schools were fully democratic then the students would make demands that did not conform to the expectations and regulations of the schools. These kinds of claims could be traced back to

arguments advanced in literature, already discussed in this chapter and in chapter two, that in many traditional Kenyan societies children are socialised to listen and take instructions from adults (see Nangoli, 2002; Otula, 2007). In this study I refer to these perceptions as 'culturally embedded' perceptions. These perceptions seemed to influence the practices in the schools with regards to the dealings with students more than the 'rationally' perceived practices.

As seen in figure 4 , there were practices in the schools that could be linked to the culturally embedded perceptions and others that could be linked to rational perceptions, for example, involving students in changing the school routine in Case One School. At the same time there were those practices that transcended both rational and culturally embedded perceptions, for example, raising money to help poor students pay school fees and buy personal items, thus the overlap. Equally, there was likelihood that the practices in the schools also reinforced the perceptions by way of approval, for example, some students in Case Two School supporting the use of corporal punishment and those in Case One School expressing satisfaction with being involved in the development of the strategic plan.

Overall, as shown in figure 4, the culturally, embedded perceptions influenced practices in the schools more extensively than the rational perceptions – whence the different sizes of the two circles in the "practice" circle.

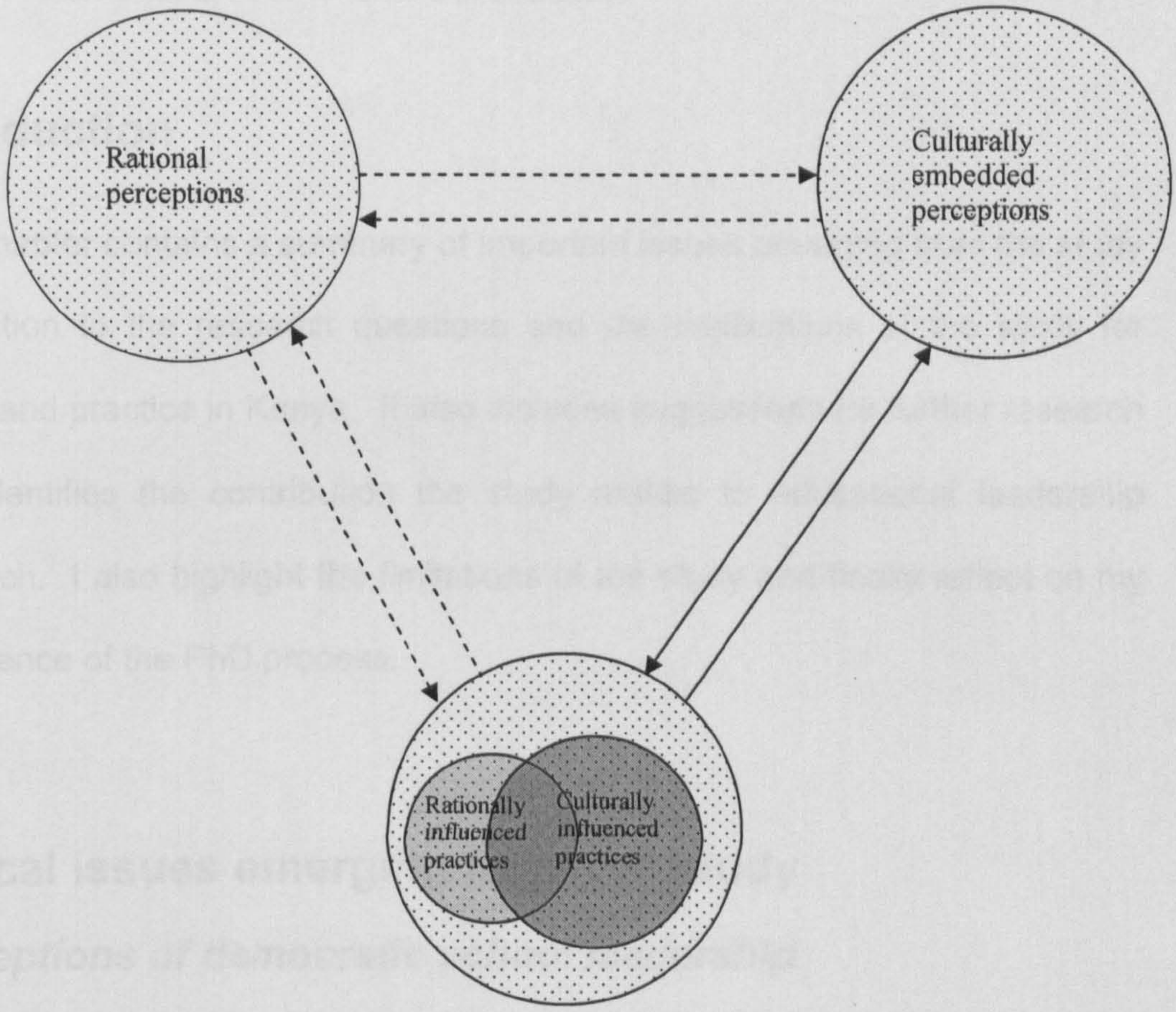

Figure 4: The influences of rational and culturally embedded perceptions on practices in schools

CHAPTER EIGHT: CONCLUSION

Introduction

This chapter contains a summary of important issues emerging from the study in relation to the research questions and the implications of the study for policy and practice in Kenya. It also includes suggestions for further research and identifies the contribution the study makes to educational leadership research. I also highlight the limitations of the study and finally reflect on my experience of the PhD process.

Critical issues emerging from the study

Perceptions of democratic school leadership

I set out to investigate how principals, teachers and students perceive democratic school leadership and how these perceptions informed practices in their schools. Overall, my findings suggest that the perceptions of democratic school leadership did not vary much between the two Case Schools *and* appeared confined to participation in decision-making in the schools as well as the rights of students and teachers to express their views without inhibitions.

Practices in the schools

Most of the practices in the schools were informed by the 'culturally embedded' perceptions especially when dealing with students – and so the schools practised what most of the teachers referred to as 'partial'/'guided'

democracy. But, the 'partial/guided' democracy seemed to vary between the two Case Schools based on the socio-cultural context of the schools. The majority of the teachers and principals seemed aware that some of their practices were far from being democratic when dealing with students, but they argued that their practices suited their contexts and that it worked for them. Equally, the majority of principals seemed to closely relate the schools socio-cultural and economic context to the way they handled the students in their schools.

There appeared to be a kind of dilemma from the principals between government policies (because of lack of consultation before changes were introduced) and how to implement the changes in schools. This could explain the continued use of corporal punishment in the schools, as seen in Case Two School and the views expressed by eleven of the twelve principals I interviewed in Phase One. These principals resorted to a 'silent understanding' with most parents about how to treat the students and ignored the government policies.

The findings also suggest that teachers were involved in many decisions and operations in the schools but the levels of involvement differed between the two Case Schools. While Case One School used committees and departmental groupings to involve the teachers, Case Two School tended to get the teachers involved as one team.

As stated earlier in Chapter seven, I can say that the principals' and teachers' 'rational' perceptions of democratic school leadership (which were not

significantly different from the elements of democracy discussed in literature) did not appear to inform their practices in the schools when dealing with students. Instead the 'culturally embedded' perceptions, which they revealed when I talked to them about their actions in the school, influenced their treatment of the students. Apart from the 'cultural pressure', this could also be attributed to lack of leadership training.

Implications for policy and practice

The main intention of this study was to generate a body of empirical data that could shed more light on the issue of school leadership in Kenya. However, the findings may also be useful for policy and the practice of school leadership in Kenya.

First, the findings suggest that the school principals feel they are not consulted by the Government when it (Government) intends to introduce changes such as the need for democratic school leadership and the ban on corporal punishment. Therefore, such policies do not seem to stop the principals from carrying out practices that they consider to be suitable for their schools. I suggest that the Government needs to involve the school principals more when instituting such changes. This can be done through representative bodies such as KSSHA which can consult its members and forward their views to the government. This kind of consultation could also be extended to the teachers through their union representatives as well as students. This may reduce the principals' feeling of exclusion from decision-making about key issues that affect their practices in schools, and the feeling

that the Government was using double standards (requiring principals to be democratic yet not dealing with them democratically).

Second, the principals feel they lack sufficient training for them to adequately implement changes such as adopting democratic school leadership. The in-service courses they attend at KESI are more concerned with managerial duties, such as financial management. They note that such courses do not equip them adequately to handle leadership challenges in a changing educational context. Therefore, there is need for developmental opportunities for school leaders and teachers that focus on democratic ideals. As Bredeson (2004) points out, the preparation and professional development of school leaders requires a subtext on democratic principles and values which are central to school leader training, development and practice. This should be done before one becomes a school principal and complemented with regular in-service training on the same issues. The training should be conducted by KESI, which already has the training mandate, through the collaboration among the training institutions, the Ministry of Education and the schools. This will help infuse the cultural contexts of the schools, the experience of the serving principals and the government policies (such as requirements for democratic school leadership). This approach to training will help reduce the gap between government policies and the cultural orientations of the principals – as demonstrated in the practices in the schools in this study.

Equally, efforts to implement democratic school leadership should also be included in teacher training programmes. This can be done through

collaboration between the training institutions such as the universities and the Ministry of Education so that teachers are trained on some of the current issues in school leadership. Similarly, KESI could be expanded in the long term to undertake full training of those aspiring to become school principals. And, to make the ban of corporal punishment effective and enhance participation of students in school matters, such training should include instructions on the negative short - and long - term consequences of corporal punishment. Alongside this requirement, schools need a sufficient number of trained counsellors to enhance the use of alternative forms of punishment. This is because my findings suggest that one of the reasons why teachers and principals claimed they resorted to corporal punishment, which was inhuman and humiliating to the students, was due to lack of teachers trained in guidance and counselling.

Third, it also emerged from this study that the current school leadership prescriptions seem to prioritize what Strain (2009) refers to as the surfaces of 'role performance' and 'quality', as necessary for the achievement of selected recordable attainments, or outcomes exemplified in the performance in the national examinations. This is valued more than responsiveness to personal claims for justice, voice, and inclusion. The teachers have to follow rigid syllabuses that leave very little room for them to engage students in more robust ways in their learning. As a result the involvement of students in class activities, which literature reveals is necessary for a democratic school, is very limited. This calls for the need to balance justice and voice with the already existing performance indicators of tests and examinations. It can be done through the training of the teachers and principals in approaches that

give students more voice in school operations *both in and outside the* classroom.

Overall, my findings suggest that there is an urgent need for closer understanding and collaboration between the government, the communities and the schools so that national policies are implemented in a manner that harmonises cultural orientations of the various ethnic communities within which the schools are located with government requirements. Subsequently, there may be need to introduce new leadership policies gradually, and probably have these ideals taught to the students as well so that they too get to know their rights. Part of this was already taking place in Case One School, albeit at a more specific level on their rights as girls.

Suggestions for further research

Although I establish students', teachers' and principals' perceptions of democratic school leadership, questions have emerged that require further research. These are: Does the Kenyan government have a clear picture of what constitutes democratic school leadership which it wants the principals to implement? If so, how do they make sure that these ideas are implemented? Answering these questions may reveal exactly what the government officials perceive as democratic school leadership and how they might go ahead to get this implemented. It may also establish how the government is dealing with the tensions that exist between some of the cultural practices in many

ethnic communities and democratic school practices especially with regard to girls and the youth.

In the light of the changes taking place in Kenyan schools and the requirements of democratic school leadership, it is necessary to establish how these requirements are reflected in the training of secondary teachers who later become school principals. This is because most, if not all, teachers went through a school system where the democratic ideals were not practised, and may not see the need to treat the students differently. This calls for a study to establish the link and coordination, if any, between the government policies (Ministry of Education), the universities that train the teachers and the contextual conditions in the field (practice).

Contributions to education leadership research

Based on my knowledge of the context of the study, literature review, data collection process and analysis, I consider that my study makes important contributions to issues on democratic school leadership. First, in the Kenyan context, I have not come across any study on democratic school leadership. This could be because democratic school leadership is new and not yet fully embraced by the Kenyan society. This is reflected in the current debate on leadership practices in schools where most members of the public and many senior government officers are advocating for the removal of the few democratic practices in schools which, they claim, have led to the increase in violent unrest in schools, and appealing for the re-introduction of corporal punishment.

Although some studies have documented issues on general education in Kenya (e.g. Bogonko, 1992; Eshiwani, 1993; Harber, 2002; Herriot, *et al.*, 2002.), I have been unable to locate any on the perceptions of democratic school leadership in secondary schools despite an extensive literature search through university libraries and the internet. My study, therefore, contributes important empirical evidence that should be considered in the ongoing debate on the need for reform in school leadership in Kenya, particularly on the need for leadership training of school leaders to spearhead changes towards democratic school leadership that the government requires in schools. This is because the current training offered to them at KESI is not adequate. Similarly, the training they get to become teachers does not qualify them to be school principals which require more specialist training. To this end, my study contributes a great deal in the Kenyan context.

Secondly, methodologically, my study also makes significant contributions in the Kenyan context. It highlights the qualitative method as a viable option for studying educational issues. I say this because qualitative methodology is not quite visible in the Kenyan research context. Quantitative surveys are considered the more 'acceptable' way of doing educational research. Although qualitative research is widely practised in the international research community, it does not receive as much attention in Kenya. Therefore, my study contributes greatly to the way researchers in Kenya can conceive of the application of this paradigm in research especially the application of approaches such as 'compressed ethnography' and use of 'informal conversations'. In this respect, with two of my colleagues (one currently a

PhD student at the University of Leeds, UK), we have published an article on the 'trustworthiness of qualitative research' in a local journal in Kenya:

> Ong'ondo, C.O., Jwan, J.O. & Barasa, L.P. (2008). Trustworthiness in qualitative research in education: validity and reliability or credibility and dependability? What is in a name? *The Educator: A Journal of the School of Education, Moi University, 2* (2), 27-37.

Most significantly, the use of an ethnographic approach in educational research in Kenya is almost non existent and this is one area where my study will be an eye opener for many educational researchers. Overall, I have supplied sufficient detail on the methodological approaches, data generation and analysis process that demonstrates the logic of my findings and discussion and this will be very useful to my colleagues who may want to venture into qualitative research.

Another important aspect is ethical considerations in research, which many in Kenya still believe are only applicable in medical and related research. From my experience as a teacher in a secondary school for five years, at primary teachers college for one year and at the university for twelve years, I noted that many researchers conducting research in schools believe that once access has been granted by the school principal then there is no need to seek further access from teachers and more so from students (I was no exception but now I know better).

Lastly, having read a great deal of literature on educational leadership and democratic school leadership, *it is very clear* that there is very little documented research in educational leadership from Africa (leave alone Kenya) that is currently available at the international arena - save for the

emerging research publications from South Africa. This does not mean that there is no discourse in educational leadership going on in these countries. My study will contribute to the ever-expanding field of educational leadership, specifically, debates on democratic school leadership, and this will add to the literature and geographical spread of knowledge about perceptions and practices of democratic school leadership at an international level. In addition, I contribute to the discussion on the interplay between community culture and practices in schools, as well as how these two relate with the government polices.

Limitations of the study

I conducted the fieldwork over a period of seven months. The second phase of the research was a case study of two schools undertaken during a four month period (six weeks in each school). My selection of the two Case Schools was informed by interviews with 12 school principals that were conducted and analysed three months earlier. While the sample was necessitated by the constraints of time and other resources, the findings may only be confined to the group of twelve principals and the two Case Schools. As already stated, the main goal of the study was to generate empirical evidence that could contribute to our understanding of perceptions of democratic school leadership by principals, teachers and students in these specific schools and not necessarily to make wider claims to generalisation.

However, as pointed out in chapter three, it is possible to draw analytic or naturalistic generalisations from my study (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007;

Stake, 2005/1995; Yin, 2003). Nevertheless, I acknowledge that involving more schools in other parts of Kenya may have provided more insights to perceptions of democratic school leadership and practices in these schools considering the diverse and distinct socio-cultural orientations of the many ethnic communities in Kenya. All the same, my study highlights important issues that may resonate with other schools in Kenya with similar characteristics.

Another limitation of my study relates to the literature review. While I appreciate that socio-cultural contexts do have an influence in the way that leadership is conceptualised and practised, and the fact that in most cases Western paradigms are used to 'judge' non-Western practices in socio-cultural contexts that may be distinctly different, I have predominantly used literature from the Western World. There are two reasons for this. The first is that this literature is substantial and academically rigorous and provides a wide range of theoretical and methodological arguments. Secondly, as already stated, not much is documented from Africa, especially Kenya, which addresses the specific area of my study - democratic school leadership. However, I believe this does not compromise the quality of my work and I still manage to bring out issues that are critical to school leadership in Kenya.

Equally, I was only in these two Case Schools in one specific term (first term that runs from January to March). As Hammersley and Atkinson (2007) point out, the specific activities that take place in schools at different periods of the year may influence practices in the schools in very significant ways - including leadership practices. As explained under the Kenyan education system in

Chapter one, there are different curriculum and extra-curriculum activities lined up for each term and all of them may demonstrate participation by students and teachers in different ways. However, I believe the amount of data I gathered, the thick and logical descriptions of the study, give good insight into what goes on in the schools and therefore the length of time did not significantly compromise the quality of the data and work in general.

Epilogue

Looking back, I can say that the entire MSc and PhD projects were enriching and a life-changing experience for me. I feel transformed from almost an unquestioning consumer of academic information to an upcoming critical reader and researcher. I come from an academic background where critical reasoning is not very well facilitated or probably not sufficiently emphasised (even though stated in policy documents). Part of this could be cultural, where one practically looks up to 'seniors' without being critical of what they stand for, it does not matter whether one agrees with them or not. Even if one does not agree with the senior, it has to be articulated in a manner that is unnecessarily (or so I think) uncritical. The PhD process here in the UK has been a great eye opener and made me more critical in my approach to reading other people's work.

Equally, I come from a research background that is predominantly positivist where 'objective' knowledge especially in education is generated predominantly through quantitative methods. Research is mainly defined in terms of experiments and surveys involving probability samples and

hypothesis testing using statistics (ANOVA, T-test, Regression and so on). I am aware of previous efforts to force into this paradigm studies that (now I realise) would benefit from qualitative methods because they sought deeper understanding of socio-cultural-educational and human enterprises of a qualitative nature. This research project has enabled me to learn and appreciate the viability, principles and processes of qualitative research. By extension it has broadened my awareness and understanding of the existence of various ontological and epistemological paradigms in social science research. Perhaps the greatest gift I take home is the ability to design and successfully carry out a qualitative study while also able to make sense of quantitative research.

Ultimately, I conclude that my study has brought to my attention many complex issues surrounding school leadership, more so democratic school leadership because of the robust literature and researches from various parts of the world that highlight the various tensions and contradictions, and developments and questions in the field of educational leadership. I believe I will continue to engage in more research to contribute to the field of educational leadership. I have definitely found it an enriching and worthwhile journey.

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